The Death of Jesus

A compilation of the evidence of Islamic sources and authorities and Muslim scholars and writers

by

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Translator's Preface

The Urdu book *Wafāt-i Masīḥ Nāṣirī*, of which this is the English translation, was written by Maulana Hafiz Sher Muhammad, the eminent scholar and distinguished international missionary of the Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam, Lahore, Pakistan, and first published from Fiji in October 1980. A little earlier the learned author had sent me its manuscript for translation into English. The translation that I then made was published in installments in the period 1980 to 1982 in two magazines of our Movement: the bi-lingual *Paigham-i Haqq* of Fiji, and *The Islamic Review* which was issued in those days from California.

In 1997 I returned to this translation and requested some members of the Youngmen's Association of our Central body, the Ahmadiyya Anjuman, Lahore, Pakistan, to type it into computer form. I am grateful to them for their typing work, which they did promptly and competently. I then revised the translation by carefully comparing it with the published Urdu booklet, and it was printed in installments in *The Light and Islamic Review* of Ohio from the March–April 1998 to the November–December 1999 issue.

That revised translation is now being published in the form of this booklet with some further amendments. An Appendix has been added, quoting views expressed by some Muslim writers on this subject which appeared after the Urdu work was compiled.

In transcribing Arabic (and Urdu) words and terms in English letters, the use of diacritical marks over and under certain letters (as for example in *ā, ḥ* or *th*) has been generally avoided, especially in common words such as *Quran* and

Hadith (which would be *Qur'ān* and *Ḥadīth*). Diacritical marks expressing full transliteration have only been used in cases where the meaning of a word is discussed, an expression is quoted, or the spelling of a word, name or title of book needs to be shown exactly to avoid ambiguity.

Within quotations there are a few instances where an extra explanatory word or two had to be inserted, and this is done in square brackets, thus [ ]. Round brackets are used inside translated quotations, thus ( ), at those points where it is desired to show the original word or term used as well as its translation.

It is hoped this book will establish that the highest and earliest sources of Islam plainly teach that Jesus has died, just as every other prophet died, and that a large number of Muslim religious scholars, leaders, intellectuals and writers of recent times who are outside the Ahmadiyya Movement also uphold the same view.

Zahid Aziz
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Introduction

The first point of difference between the Ahmadiyya Movement and the general body of the rest of the Muslims is the issue of the death of Jesus. The ordinary Muslim public considers that Jesus is alive in heaven in his physical, human body. As against this view, the Ahmadiyya Movement among Muslims, as well as those religious scholars of the rest of the Muslims who have investigated this matter, believe that Jesus died as did the other prophets.

Before dealing with this issue in detail, it is necessary to expand upon the following points by way of introduction and background.

Firstly, what is the necessity, in these modern times, of raising the issue of whether Jesus is dead or alive?

Secondly, what is the harm and damage done to our beliefs by accepting that Jesus is still alive in bodily form?

Thirdly, what is the judgment of the Holy Quran, Hadith reports and Muslim religious scholars regarding whether Jesus died or is still alive?

Fourthly, if Jesus has died like the other prophets, then how did the belief that he is alive become established among the Muslims?

Regarding the first question, that point is raised by those who have little interest in the propagation of Islam and have not felt the need to spread Islam among Christians and followers of other faiths, and thus they have not had to face any difficulties in disseminating the message of Islam. It is a fact

that this issue was the greatest obstacle in the path of the propagation of Islam to the Christian world.

In answer to the second question, if the belief had been that Jesus was alive with normal human attributes then no objection would have arisen nor would this belief have made any difference to the fundamentals of our faith. However, if Jesus is accorded certain attributes that belong only to Allah, then such a belief is most certainly against the clear teachings of the Holy Quran. In fact, the life for Jesus which cannot be accepted is that which is being projected by the Christian world, as a result of which the Christian missionaries have been able to bring hundreds of thousands of Muslims into Christianity because of the Muslims' belief in Jesus still being alive. The newspapers of India and Pakistan bear witness to the success of this approach of the Christian missionaries.

The beliefs held about Jesus by the ordinary Muslim public, regarding his life and death, are as follows. When the Jews were about to crucify him Allah took him up to heaven, alive in his physical body, and he is alive there today. He does not require food or drink to live, nor any other necessities of life. He is not affected by the passage of time nor has his body undergone any physical change in all this long duration. When he will descend his age will be forty years. He will still hold the office of prophet as he did before, while some believe that he will be removed from the rank of prophethood and will be a member of the Muslim *umma.* He will receive revelation regularly, and his mission will be the reformation of the world, so much so that even the *umma* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad will stand in need of being reformed by him.

As opposed to this, regarding the life and death of our Holy Prophet Muhammad the belief is that when the unbelievers were about to kill him in Makka he had to seek refuge on this earth in the cave of Thaur, his death was like that of other human beings and he is buried in Madina.

Now if we contrast and compare these beliefs, what remains of Islam, and how can Muslims hold up their heads in the face of Christianity? As Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wrote in poetic verse:

They think Jesus to be alive till the Day of Judgment,
But give not this distinction to the one buried in Madina.
They have aided the Christians with their own statements,
So that even the worshippers of a dead man have become emboldened.

As stated above, the matter is not merely that of believing Jesus to be alive but holding that he is alive with certain attributes which make him share divinity with Allah. That is entirely *shirk*, associating others with Allah, and such wrong beliefs according to the teachings of the Holy Quran are fatal for the Muslims.

The harm and defects of believing Jesus to be alive

Firstly, the belief that Jesus is alive in heaven in his earthly body implies denial of the Divine attribute of *subḥān,* that Allah is above, and free of, any physical or material limitations. This belief leads to the admission that Allah also has a material, physical form of existence at a particular place in the heavens, towards which Jesus was raised in his earthly body. However, Allah is pure of being in bodily form and located in a particular place. This was why when the unbelievers of Makka demanded of the Holy Prophet Muhammad that he "ascend into heaven" and "bring down to us a book", Allah told him to give the reply:

> "Say: Glory to my Lord (*subḥāna rabbī*)! Am I anything but a mortal messenger?" (17:93)

This reply means that not only is the concept of ascending to Allah with the earthly body inconsistent with being a mortal human being but it also leads to the denial of Allah's attribute of *subḥāniyya* because it implies that Allah has a physical,

material body in the physical heavens at some place, whereas Allah is free of physical limitations and such a belief is against the clearest teachings of the Holy Quran.

Secondly, if it is believed that Jesus possesses a body that is alive in heaven for two thousand years without the need of food and drink, without other necessities of life, and is not altered by the passage of time, then the undeniable conclusion is that he is *alān kamā kāna* ("now as he always was"), he is not a created being but possesses the attributes of the Creator. In this way, the Christians, who otherwise can present no evidence of the divinity of Jesus, need only to put forward the belief of the Muslims that Jesus is still alive in support of their doctrine.

Thirdly, the belief that Jesus is alive also contradicts the finality of prophethood. The Holy Quran declares:

> "Muhammad is not the father of any man from among you but he is the Messenger of Allah and the one to end the prophets (*Khātam an-nabiyyin*)." (33:40)

The Holy Prophet himself also announced: *Lā nabiyya baʿdī* ("There is no prophet after me").

If Jesus is alive in his physical body in heaven and is to return to reform the world, then as he would appear after the Holy Prophet Muhammad he would be the last prophet, which is in clear contradiction to the finality of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad.

Hence the belief in the continuing life of Jesus in heaven, a life not subject to natural laws, implies denying Allah's attribute of being free from physical limitations, it opens the door to considering Jesus to possess Divine attributes, and it necessitates departing from the belief that the Holy Prophet Muhammad was the Last Prophet.

You can see how this belief about Jesus leads to a complete annulment of these basic teachings of Islam. If he is regarded

as having died, like all other prophets, then none of these defects arise, and in fact it strikes a blow at the wrong creed of Christianity.

Jesus was subject to the laws that Allah has instituted in this world for the life and death of all human beings. There is no separate law to keep him alive. The Holy Quran clearly says regarding Jesus that he was a human being, with all the attributes that define a human being, and that he did not share any Divine attribute with Allah but was a servant of Allah and His chosen messenger.

Chapter 1

Evidence of the Holy Quran

The Holy Quran emphatically proves that Jesus has passed away like other mortal human beings, and is no longer alive anywhere. It clearly states that Jesus possessed only human characteristics, and was in no way Divine but a servant of Allah and His messenger. From birth to death, he was subject to all the physical and biological limitations that Allah has ordained for human beings.

***First evidence:* All human beings live and die in this world**

Prophets belong to the human race, and they are, therefore, subject to the eternal Divine law that human beings live and die in this world. The Quran states:

1. "Therein (i.e. on the earth or physical world) shall you live, and therein shall you die, and therefrom shall you be raised." (7:25)
2. "And there is for you in the earth an abode and a provision." (7: 4)
3. "Have We not made the earth draw to itself the living and the dead." (77: 25, 26)
4. "From it (i.e. the earth) We created you, and into it We shall return you, and from it raise you a second time." (20:55)

In these verses Allah has set forth His law that all human beings shall live their lives, with their physical bodies, on earth. Furthermore, it is opposed to the Divine law, according

to which prophets have to bear persecution here on earth, that Jesus should be raised up to heaven when he was opposed by the Jews. His supposed physical life in heaven for two thousand years without food or drink is also opposed to the Divine law expressed in the above verses.

Second Evidence: **Physical life depends on food and drink**

Allah has described His law, applicable not only to ordinary people but to all prophets as well, that life depends on food and drink:

1. "We did not send before you (O Muhammad) any messenger but they surely ate food." (25:20)
2. "We did not give them (i.e. the prophets) bodies not eating food." (21:8)

Of Jesus and his righteous mother, it is stated: "They both used to eat food" (5:7). So if Jesus no longer eats food — all Muslims hold that he does not eat food in heaven — he cannot, by the Divine law stated above, be alive with his physical body. The body requires food, so Jesus no longer eating food must be dead.

Third Evidence: **Human body suffers ravages of time**

There is not a single human body in the world which is impervious to change. The living body is necessarily changing all the time. The Quran states:

1. "And We granted abiding for ever (*khuld*) to no mortal before you (O Muhammad). If you die, will they abide (*khālidūn*)" (21:34).
2. "They (i.e. the prophets) did not abide forever (*khālidīn*)" (21:8).

As regards the meaning of the word *khulūd* (translated above as *abiding forever*), the famous Quranic dictionary of Imam Raghib explains:

> "*Khulūd* is that a thing be immune from decay, and that it endures in an unchanging condition. The Arabs call such a thing *khulūd*... i.e., to persist in one condition, not being subject to change" (pp. 153, 154).

According to Arabic lexicology, therefore, *khulūd* signifies persistence in one and the same state, with no change or decay taking place. In the verses above, a Divine law has been explained under which every person is affected by the passage of time. He is first a child, then an adult, then old and finally he dies. This is corroborated by many other verses, for example:

1. "Allah is He Who created you from a state of weakness, then gave you strength after weakness, then ordained weakness and hoary hair after strength." (30:54)
2. "Of you is he who is brought back to the worst part of life (i.e. old age) so that after knowledge he knows nothing." (22:5)
3. "And whomsoever We cause to live long, We reduce to an abject state in creation. Do they not understand?" (36:68)

A general law of Allah has been stated here, to which no human being is an exception. From being a child, a person grows physically to attain his fullest development. After that he begins to decline, and ultimately reaches his 'second childhood' when he loses all his former attainments.

If, for the sake of argument, Jesus were to return to this world, he would be about 2000 years of age, and hence, according to the above Divine law, too old to be capable of doing anything at all. In fact, it is certain that, under this law, Jesus died a very long time ago.

Fourth Evidence: Death of all prophets

1. "The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a messenger; messengers before him had indeed passed away." (5:75)
2. "And Muhammad is only a messenger — messengers have already passed away before him. If, then, he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?" (3:143)

The second verse here explains the first one. Both verses are similarly worded, the first referring to Jesus, and the second to the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Quran's verdict here is very clear for a truth-seeker. The first verse explicitly states that all prophets before Jesus had died — and all Muslims accept this. In the second verse, the same words are used to state that all prophets before the Holy Prophet Muhammad had died. In fact, since no prophet arose between Jesus and the Holy Prophet, the second verse could only have been revealed specifically to show that Jesus had died. Classical works of Arabic grammar tell us that, owing to the prefix *al* (*the*), the word *messengers* (*al-rusul*, lit. "the messengers") in the above two verses really means *all messengers* (see *Bahr al-Muhit*, vol. 3, p. 68).

Meaning of *kh*alā

It should be remembered that the word *kh*alā (translated in the above verses as "passed away") in the past tense without a particle, when used about human beings, refers to their death (see *Lisan al-'Arab* and *Aqrab al-Mawarad*). In the Quran too, whenever the words *qad khalat* without the particle *ilā* are used about any persons, the meaning is that they passed away and died, and will not return to this world. For instance:

1. "Those are a people that have passed away (*qad khalat*)." (2:134)
2. "…before which other nations have passed away (*qad khalat*)." (13:30)

3. "…among nations that have passed away (*qad khalat*) before them." (46:18)

4. "Such has been the way of Allah with those who have passed away (*khalat*) before." (33:38)

In interpreting the two verses about all prophets before Jesus and the Holy Prophet (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) having passed away, the commentators have generally adopted the same meaning:

> "The Holy Prophet would leave the world as had done previous prophets, by natural death or murder." (*Qanwa 'ala Baidawi*, vol. 3, p. 124)

In fact, the above verse about the Holy Prophet (3:143) itself clarifies the meaning of *khalā* (passing away of all previous prophets) by using the words "if he dies or is killed" with regard to him. Obviously, the "passing away" of all previous prophets must also be one or other of "dying" or "being killed".

***Fifth Evidence:* All "gods" are dead**

All those who are taken to be gods besides the One God are described by the Quran as "dead":

> "And those whom they call on besides Allah created nothing, while they are themselves created. Dead (are they), not living. And they know not when they will be raised." (16:20-21)

And as to Jesus being taken for a god, the Quran itself bears witness:

> "Certainly they disbelieve who say: 'Allah, He is the Messiah, son of Mary'." (5:72)

These verses prove conclusively that Jesus, who is taken to be 'god' by a large section of mankind and is called by them as "Lord Jesus", must have been dead when these verses were

revealed. Otherwise, this exception would have been mentioned here.

After *amwāt,* meaning "Dead (are they)", the words *ghairu aḥyā'-in,* meaning "not living", clarify the matter absolutely, and re-affirm the death of these "gods".

***Sixth Evidence:* Jesus' second coming contradicts Finality of Prophethood**

Jesus' coming again into this world would infringe the principle of the Finality of Prophethood because the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) is the last and final prophet according to that principle. The Quran says:

> "Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the prophets." (33:40)

The Holy Prophet's being the last prophet (*Khatam an-nabiyyin*) necessitates that after him there should not appear any prophet, neither a new one nor a former one. Just as the coming of a fresh prophet would infringe the Finality of Prophethood, so would the appearance of a former prophet, because the Last Prophet is the one who appears after all other prophets. If Jesus comes after the Holy Prophet, he (Jesus) would be the Last Prophet, the *Khatam an-nabiyyin.*

It is wrong to argue that, in his supposed second coming, Jesus would not be a prophet (*nabi*). For the Quran says:

> "Jesus said: I am a servant of Allah: He has given me the Book and made me a prophet, and made me blessed wherever I may be." (19:30-31)

So, were he to return to this world he would still be a prophet. His coming without prophethood would be meaningless, for the task of the leadership (*Imamah*) of the Muslims and successorship (*Khilafah*) to the Holy Prophet could be performed by a member of the Muslim community. Hence it

stands proved that Jesus died, as did all other prophets, and that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) is the Last Prophet.

Seventh Evidence: **Holy Quran specifically mentions Jesus' death**

Having explained so many general principles on the subject of life and death, it was not necessary that the Holy Quran should speak specifically of the death of Jesus. Nevertheless, Almighty Allah has particularly mentioned Jesus' death in the Quran. When the Jews succeeded in their plans to have Jesus sentenced to crucifixion, he prayed to Allah to be delivered from this fate, and was answered by Him thus :

> "O Jesus, I will cause you to die, and exalt you to My presence, and clear you of those who disbelieve and make those who follow you above those who disbelieve till the day of Judgment." (3:55)

Here Allah made with Jesus four promises:

1. "Cause you to die" (*tawaffā*), i.e., Jesus would not be killed by the Jews, but would die a natural death.
2. "Exalt you in My presence" (*raf'a*), i.e., he would not be crucified, which the Jews sought to do to prove him accursed, but rather he would receive Divine nearness. In fact, *raf'a* is the opposite of *waḍ'a,* the latter meaning disgrace and the former meaning honouring.
3. "Clear you of those who disbelieve" (*taṭhīr*), i.e., he would be cleared of the Jews' allegations against him, as he was by the Holy Prophet Muhammad.
4. "Make those who follow you above those who disbelieve till the day of Judgement", i.e. his followers would forever have the upper hand over his rejectors.

The above verse proves that Jesus has died, for *raf'a* (exaltation to Allah's presence) is attained only after death when all the material veils have been removed. Every righteous person

is granted *raf'a* to Allah after his death. The Holy Prophet has said:

> "When a believer nears death, angels come to him. So if he is righteous, they say: 'O pure soul! leave, you were in a pure body' … So that pure soul comes out, then they take it to the heavens and its gates are opened for it." (*Mishkat, Kitab-ul-Jana'iz*).

Hence, whenever a righteous individual dies, the angels take his *soul* up to heaven. The very same happened in Jesus' case, so that after his death it was his *soul* that was raised to heaven, and he joined the ranks of the righteous among the dead.

Thus Allah fulfilled all the above promises in order: He rescued Jesus from the hands of the Jews, and eventually granted him a natural death; after his death, Allah honoured his soul with Divine nearness; He cleared him of the Jews' allegations against him through the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) and He gave Jesus' followers the upper hand over his rejectors.

Eight Evidence: **Christians went astray after Jesus' death**

Jesus' statement, on the Day of Judgment, that his people made him a "god" *after* his death, is recorded in the Holy Quran as follows:

> "And when Allah will say: 'O Jesus, did you say to men, Take me and my mother for two gods besides Allah?' He will reply: 'Glory be to Thee! it was not for me to say what I had no right to say. If I had said it, Thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy mind. Surely Thou art the great Knower of the unseen. I said to them naught save as Thou didst command me: Serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord; *and I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die Thou wast the Watcher over*

them. And Thou art Witness of all things'." (5:116, 117)

This extract proves the following:

1. Jesus shall deny preaching the erroneous present-day Christian doctrine of his divinity.
2. He shall confirm the teaching he actually gave to his people.
3. So long as Jesus was among his people, his followers held correct beliefs.
4. It was after Jesus' *tawaffā* (translated above as 'Thou didst cause me to die') that their beliefs became corrupted.

Meaning of *tawaffā*

Lexicons of Arabic tell us that *tawaffā Allāhu fulān-an*, i.e., 'Allah did the act of *tawaffā* to such a one', means that Allah took his soul and caused him to die. This is the meaning given in *Tāj al-ʿurūs, Al-Qāmūs, Ṣurāḥ, Asās al-Balāghah, Al-Ṣiḥāḥ* and *Kullyāt abi-l-Baqā.*

In the above verse, Jesus speaks of two distinct periods of time. The first one is mentioned in the words "so long as I was among them", and the second one when only "Thou wast the Watcher over them"; 'them' being Jesus' people, the Christians. The first period (that of Jesus' presence among his people) changed into the second period (that of only Allah, not Jesus, being their watcher) as a result of *tawaffaita-nī* or "when Thou didst cause me (Jesus) to die".

Now according to the above verse, the Christians held right beliefs in the first period, and wrong views in the second. As the Quran tells us repeatedly, and as all Muslims believe, Christian beliefs had become corrupted (or, in other words, the second period had begun) by the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet. So Jesus was dead by that time, as the second period was to come after *tawaffaita-nī* or the death of Jesus.

Summary

According to the Holy Quran, Jesus holds no more than the following three positions:

1. He is a mortal from among mortals.
2. He is a prophet of Allah from among the prophets.
3. He is one of those who is worshipped as god by some people.

The Jews believe him to be an ordinary mortal, while the Christians worship him. The Muslims accept him as one of Allah's prophets. The Quran has proved Jesus to be dead with respect to each one of the above three positions.

1. Jesus as an ordinary mortal:

The Quran states:

> "We have not made before you (O Muhammad) any mortal to abide forever. If you die, will they (the opponents) abide?" (21:34)

This verse shows that the human body is never immune from change, and that it must live and die here in this world. As Jesus too was human, he must be subject to the laws Allah has established for men. Therefore, under the Quranic law "every soul must taste of death", he has died.

2. Jesus as a prophet:

> "And Muhammad is only a messenger — messengers have already passed away before him." (3:143)

This verse proves the death of *all* previous messengers by the time of its revelation. Jesus was thus dead by that time.

3. Jesus as a supposed Deity:

As regards all those who are taken for gods besides Allah, the Quran tells us:

> "Dead (are they), not living. And they know not when they will be raised." (16:21)

It is universally known, and confirmed by the Quran, that Christians believe Jesus to be divine and call to him in their prayers. So, according to the above verse, Jesus is dead and "will not answer them till the day of Judgment."

Hence it is fully and conclusively proved that Jesus died long ago, and belief in his continued life is against the clearest teachings of the Holy Quran.

Chapter 2

Evidence of the Hadith

We have shown from numerous verses of the Holy Quran that Jesus is not alive in heaven but that he died in his own time as did other prophets. No doubt should, therefore, remain in the mind of any just and truth-loving person about this matter. But, for further satisfaction of the seekers after truth, we now present some sayings (Hadith reports) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, who of course was the recipient of Quranic revelation and its premier commentator, to decide this issue so thoroughly that each and every Muslim would have to bow to the verdict.

First Hadith: **Meaning of *tawaffā***

> "It is reported from Ibn Abbas that the Holy Prophet said in a sermon: O people! You will be gathered to your Lord (on the day of Judgment) … and some people from my *Umma* will be taken and dragged towards hell. I shall say: 'O Lord, but these are my people'. It will be replied: 'You do not know what they did after you'. Then I shall say as did that righteous servant of Allah (i.e., Jesus) say: '*I was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die (tawaffaita-nī) Thou wast Watcher over them*' …"
>
> (*Bukhari, Kitab al-Tafsir,* under *Surah Ma'idah.*)

The last words of the Holy Prophet ("I was a witness of them…") are taken from the verse 5:117 of the Holy Quran where Jesus is quoted as replying in these very words on the

Day of Judgment. It is agreed by all Muslims that, when these words are used by the Holy Prophet in the above Hadith report, the meaning of *tawaffaita-nī* occurring there is "Thou didst cause me to die". So obviously they have the same meaning when used by Jesus, i.e., Jesus was taken from his people by *death,* not by rising alive to heaven.

***Second Hadith:* Seeing Jesus in company of the dead**

The various Hadith reports about the Holy Prophet's *Mi'raj* record:

> "Adam is in the first heaven … Joseph is in the second heaven, and his cousins Yahya (John the Baptist) and Jesus are in the third heaven, and Idris is in the fourth heaven."
>
> (*Kanz al-'Ummāl,* vol. vi, p. 120)

The Holy Prophet (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) saw Yahya and Jesus *in the same place;* and as the former, indeed every other prophet seen, is dead, so must Jesus be.[1]

The above hadith is corroborated by another that tells us that in the *Mi'raj* vision the Holy Prophet met the spirits of all the previous prophets (see *Tafsir Ibn Kathir,* Urdu ed. published in Karachi, vol. iii, p. 18).

Third Hadith:* Jesus' "descent" on night of *Mi'raj

A hadith about the *Mi'raj* records:

> "Then the Holy Prophet descended in Jerusalem, along with all the other prophets. At the time of prayers, he lead them all in prayer."
>
> (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir,* Urdu ed., vol. iii, p. 23)

1. For the Holy Prophet Muhammad seeing Yahya and Jesus in the same place in heaven, see also in *Bukhari, Kitab al-anbiya* (Book of Prophets), the report by Malik ibn Sa'sa'a, and in *Muslim, Kitab al-Iman* (Book of Faith), the report by Anas ibn Malik.

Among "all" the prophets is included Jesus.[2] Had he, unlike other prophets, been alive physically in heaven, his "descent" to Jerusalem would have been with his material body. In that case he would have had to rise up to heaven physically *a second time*. But the Quran mentions only one *raf'* ("exaltation" which is misunderstood as "rising up to heaven") of Jesus!

This difficulty does not arise if we believe, as is clear from the various Hadith reports about *Mi'raj*, that Jesus was in the same state (i.e. dead) as all the other prophets seen in the vision.

***Fourth Hadith:* All prophets had to die**

In his last illness, during which he died, the Holy Prophet Muhammad entered the mosque with the support of two men to give the following address:

> "O people! I have heard that you fear the death of your Prophet. Did any prophet before me live on so that I should be expected to live on amongst you? Listen! I am about to meet my Lord, and so will you. So I bid you to treat well the early *muhajirs.*"
>
> (*Al-anwār-ul-Muhammadiyya min al-Muwāhib al-Ladinya*, Egypt, p. 317)

This hadith settles the meaning of the three Quranic verses:

> "Muhammad is only a messenger, messengers before him have indeed passed away" (3:144);
>
> "And We made no mortal before you (O Muhammad) to live on forever" (21:34);

and:

> Nor did they (the prophets) live on forever" (21:8).

2. For all the prophets praying behind the Holy Prophet Muhammad, see also in *Muslim, Kitab al-Iman* (Book of Faith), chapter 'Night Journey of the Messenger of Allah to heaven and the making obligatory of prayers', the report by Abu Hurairah.

Had *any prophet at all* still been alive, the Holy Prophet could not have uttered the words above. So Jesus was dead by that time.

***Fifth Hadith:* Death within a century**

1. "There is no one alive today but will be dead before a hundred years have passed over it." (*Muslim, Kitab al-Faza'il; Kanz al-'Ummāl,* vol. 7, p. 170)

2. "The Holy Prophet said: 'Allah sends a wind every hundred years which takes the soul of every believer'. This hadith is sound in transmission." (*Mustadrak,* vol. 4, p. 475)

These hadith show that all those who were alive in the Holy Prophet's time died within a hundred years. Had Jesus been alive (in heaven as is supposed) he too would have died within that period.

***Sixth Hadith:* Jesus' age given as 120**

> "Aishah (Allah be pleased with her) said that, in his illness in which he died, the Holy Prophet said: 'Every year Gabriel used to repeat the Holy Quran with me once, but this year he has done it twice. He has informed me that there is no prophet but he lives half as long as the one who preceded him. And he has told me that Jesus lived a hundred and twenty years, and I see that I am about to leave this world at sixty'."
>
> (*Ḥujjaj al-Kirāmah,* p. 428; *Kanz al-'Ummāl,* vol. 6, p. 160, from Hazrat Fatima; and *Mawāhib al-Ladinya,* vol. 1, p. 42)

The *Tabarani* says concerning this hadith: "Its narrations are reliable, and it is reported in a number of different versions". The hadith here leaves no room to doubt at all. It not only announces Jesus' death but gives his age as 120 years. And it is reported through at least three channels: from Aishah,

Ibn Umar and Fatima. This hadith is, therefore, sound and a very clear proof of Jesus' death.

***Seventh Hadith:* Jesus dead like Moses**

1. The Holy Prophet Muhammad said: "Had Moses or Jesus been alive, they would have had to follow me."

   (*Al-Yawaqit wal-Jawahir,* p. 24; *Fath al-Bayan,* vol. 2, p. 246; *Tafsir Ibn Kathir,* under verse 81 of *Al-i Imran*)

2. "Had Jesus been alive he would have had to follow me."

   (*Sharh Fiqh Akbar,* Egyptian ed., p. 99)

3. "No. 19: If Moses and Jesus were alive, they would have but followed me."

   (English text from *Al-Islam,* published by the Fiji Muslim Youth Organization, vol. 4, Oct. 1974)

The above Hadith reports clearly show that *both* Moses and Jesus were considered to be dead by the Holy Prophet.

***Eighth Hadith:* Tomb of Jesus**

The Holy Prophet said:

> "May the curse of Allah be upon the Jews and the Christians who made the graves of their prophets into places of worship."
>
> (*Bukhari, Kitab as-Salat,* chapter: 'Should the graves of the idolaters of the *Jahiliyya* be dug up and mosques take their place?')

The Holy Prophet said this because he was anxious that the Muslims should avoid the evil of making the tomb of their prophet into a place of worship, as Jews and Christians had done with their prophets' graves. The *Jews* had had numerous prophets but the prophet properly recognised by the *Christians* is only one — Jesus. This hadith shows that the Holy Prophet believed that Jesus had a tomb. And, in fact, this is the place where Jesus was kept after being removed from the cross (till

he recovered from his wounds), which Christians revere greatly. Obviously, according to this hadith, Jesus did not rise up to heaven.

Ninth Hadith: **Holy Prophet's discussion with a Christian delegation**

> "When a delegation of sixty men from the (Christian) people of Najran came to the Holy Prophet, their chief priest discussed with him the status of Jesus and asked him as to who Jesus' father was. The Holy Prophet said: 'Do you not know that a son resembles his father?' They replied: 'Yes'. He said: *A lastum ta'lamūna anna rabba-nā lā yamūtu wa anna 'Īsā ata 'alaihi-l-fanā',* i.e., *Do you not know that our Lord lives forever while Jesus perished."*
>
> (*Asbab an-nuzul,* by Imam Abu-l-Hasan Ali ibn Ahmad al-Wahidi of Neshapur, published Egypt, p. 53)

What clearer testimony could there be that Jesus has died than this saying from the blessed tongue of the Holy Prophet!

Tenth Hadith: **Two different descriptions of Jesus**

In Bukhari there are recorded two different physical descriptions of Jesus, one applying to the past Messiah and the other to the Messiah whose advent in the latter days is prophesied.

In the *Mi'raj* the Messiah seen by the Holy Prophet with Moses, Abraham and other prophets, was described by him thus:

1. "I saw Jesus. He was a man of a reddish complexion."
   (*Bukhari, Kitab al-anbiya,* chapter headed: Allah's saying "Has there come to you the story of Moses?".)
2. "I saw Jesus, Moses and Abraham. Jesus had a reddish complexion, curly hair and a broad chest."
   (*Bukhari, Kitab al-anbiya,* chapter headed: "And mention Mary in the Book".)

It is clear from both these Hadith reports that by Jesus, who was seen here along with Abraham and Moses, is meant the Israelite prophet. He had a red complexion and curly hair.

However, Bukhari has also recorded Hadith reports in which the Holy Prophet relates a dream of his *about the future*:

> "In a state of sleep I saw myself circumambulating the Ka'ba, and I saw a man of a wheatish complexion with straight hair. I asked who it was. They said: This is the Messiah, son of Mary."
>
> (*Bukhari, Kitab al-anbiya,* as in (2) above; and also *Bukhari, Kitab al-Fitn,* chapter: Mention of *Dajjal*.)

Thus, where Jesus is mentioned along with Abraham and Moses, he is described as of *a reddish complexion and curly hair;* but where he is seen along with the *Dajjal* in a dream about the future, he is said to have *a wheatish complexion with straight hair.* Evidently these two different descriptions do not apply to one and the same person. So Jesus, the Israelite prophet, whom the Holy Prophet saw in the *Mi'raj* vision, and the Messiah who was to appear in the latter days to kill the evil *Dajjal*, are two different persons.

Jesus the Israelite Messiah died, as is made clear by the Holy Prophet Muhammad's sayings. And the Messiah whose advent in the latter days has been prophesied by the Holy Prophet, was to be from the Muslim community, and *not* an Israelite prophet. This is borne out by the following three Hadith reports:

1. *'Ulamā'u ummatī ka anbiyā'i banī Isrā'īl,* i.e., "The learned ones of my community are like the prophets of the Israelites."

2. *Ala inna-hu Khalīfatī fī ummatī min ba'dī,* i.e., "Certainly he (the Messiah to come) is my *khalifa* after me in my community."

3. *Fa amma-kum min-kum*, i.e., "He shall be your Imam from among yourselves."

Conclusions

From all the Hadith reports quoted above, the following conclusions are drawn:

First hadith: The Holy Prophet Muhammad has referred to his own death using the words *falammā tawaffaita-nī*. Since these very words are used in the Holy Quran in respect of Jesus, it proves that he, too, has died.

Second hadith: On the night of the great *Mi'raj* the Holy Prophet saw Jesus and Yahya (John the Baptist) together in the same place. Yahya being dead, shows that Jesus also was dead. The Holy Prophet met not the physical bodies but the souls of the prophets in the *Mi'raj* experience.

Third hadith: On the *Mi'raj* night all the other prophets, including Jesus, were led in prayer by the Holy Prophet Muhammad in the mosque at Jerusalem. This shows that Jesus was dead, for otherwise he would have descended to Jerusalem physically, and then ascended to heaven *a second time* — something which no one believes. This vision of leading all the previous prophets in prayer signified that the Holy Prophet was the *Khatam al-anbiya*, and the one to whom the followers of these prophets would now have to render obedience.

Fourth hadith: The Holy Prophet asked his companions if *any one at all* of the previous prophets had survived so that he too would be expected to go on living. Had Jesus been alive the Holy Prophet could not have used this argument. Or, his companions would have argued back that as Jesus was alive the Holy Prophet need not die either. This shows that the Holy Prophet and his companions believed Jesus to be dead.

Fifth hadith: The Holy Prophet prophesied that all the believers living then would be dead within a hundred years. So even if Jesus had been alive then, he would have died in the specified period.

Sixth hadith: Just as the ages of various prophets, for example, Moses, David, Solomon, etc., are recorded in Hadith, Jesus' age is noted in a hadith as being 120 years.

Seventh hadith: Had Jesus been alive, the Holy Prophet could not have said that "Moses and Jesus would have been my followers *had they been still alive*".

Eighth hadith: The Holy Prophet has made a reference to the tomb of Jesus.

Ninth hadith: The Holy Prophet's discussions with the Christian delegation from Najran show that he believed Jesus to be dead.

Tenth hadith: In Bukhari two different physical descriptions of Jesus are recorded: one where he was seen along with other prophets in the *Mi'raj*; and the other where he is seen circumambulating the Ka'ba with the *Dajjal* in a dream of the Holy Prophet relating to the latter days, i.e., in the distant future. This proves that Jesus, the Israelite prophet was dead, for the Messiah of the latter days was to be another person. It should be noted that prophecies invariably require interpretation and are not necessarily fulfilled exactly literally. The reason is that when a prophet or other righteous person is shown future events by God Almighty, it is in the form of visions or dreams seen by their spiritual, not physical, eyes. All holy scriptures are agreed that most dreams and visions require interpretation. This also applies to the Holy Prophet's prophecies relating to "the descent of the Messiah", *Dajjal*, Gog and Magog, the *Dabbat al-ard*, etc.

Just because there are prophecies speaking of the "coming" of the Messiah, one cannot deduce therefrom that Jesus is still alive, while on the other hand numerous verses of the Quran and many Hadith reports declare forcefully that *Jesus is not alive but died*, and even his age is given as 120 years.

Chapter 3

Evidence of the *Ijmā'* of the Muslim *Umma*

According to Muslim belief, after the Holy Quran and then the Hadith, the Consensus of the Muslim Community (*Ijmā'* of the *Umma*) is a binding argument which every Muslim must accept. So, having proved from the Quran and the Hadith that Jesus died a natural death in his own time, it is necessary to see what decision, explicitly or implicitly, the *Ijmā'* has given in this respect.

Umar's saying

After the Holy Prophet Muhammad's death, the first *Ijmā'* of the Muslims, in which all the companions of the Holy Prophet participated, decided this very issue of Jesus' death. All authorities, i.e. collectors of Hadith, commentators of the Quran, and historians, record that when the Holy Prophet died, Umar (Allah be pleased with him) started saying:

1. "The Messenger of Allah has not died, and shall not die until Allah kills the hypocrites."
   (*Dur Mansur*, vol. iv, p. 318)

2. "The hypocrites say that the Messenger of Allah (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) has died. But he has not died. He has gone to see the Lord, as did Moses when he stayed away from his people for forty days and returned after it was thought that he had died. By Allah! the Messenger of Allah too will certainly return as Moses returned, and cut off the

hands and feet of those who say that he is dead."
(*Sirat Ibn Hisham*, Egypt, vol. iii, p. 464)

Abu Bakr's arrival and speech

We find in Hadith that Abu Bakr (Allah be pleased with him) arrived, saw the Holy Prophet, and:

> "He uncovered his face, bent down, kissed him, wept, and said: 'I would give my father for you, O Prophet of Allah; Allah would never give you two deaths, and you have died of the death that Allah had ordained for you.' Abu Salmah says: Ibn Abbas told me that Abu Bakr came out, and Umar was talking to the people. He told him to sit down, but he refused. He told him again, and he still refused. Abu Bakr then recited the *Kalima Shahada*, and the people turned their attention to him, leaving Umar."
>
> (*Bukhari, Kitab al-Jana'iz,* chapter 3; *Kitab al-Maghazi*, chapter: 'Illness of the Holy Prophet')

Hazrat Abu Bakr then announced:

> "Whoever among you worships Muhammad, Muhammad has indeed died; but whoever worships Allah, Allah lives on forever, never dies. Allah says: 'Muhammad is only a messenger; messengers before him have indeed passed away...' (the Quran, 3:144)."
>
> (*Bukhari*, reference as above.)

The companions' reaction

Bukhari records:

> "By Allah, it was as if the people did not know that Allah had revealed this verse until Abu Bakr recited it. Then (it was as if) the people had learnt it from him; and whomever one heard, he was reciting this verse (i.e. 'Muhammad is only a messenger; messengers before him have indeed passed away...')"
>
> (*Bukhari*, reference as above.)

Hazrat Umar related:

> "I was so shocked that my feet could not support me and I fell to the ground when I heard him recite it (i.e. the verse) that the Holy Prophet had indeed died."
>
> (*Bukhari, Kitab al-Maghazi*, chapter cited above.)

Companions agreed on death of all prophets

Umar's contention that the Holy Prophet had only gone to visit the Lord, and would be returning, was refuted by Abu Bakr, proving that *all* previous prophets had died — and consequently also the Holy Prophet. Had Umar or any other companion believed that Jesus was alive in heaven, he would certainly have spoken out against Abu Bakr's deduction from the verse that *all* previous prophets were dead. This shows that none of the companions even imagined that Jesus, or any other prophet, was still alive and had not died.

This incident establishes the companions' consensus — the first *Ijmā'* after the Holy Prophet — that *all prophets are dead*. It also disproves any isolated reports ascribed to certain companions that Jesus is alive in heaven, for such odd reports contradict the Quran, the Hadith, and the *Ijmā'* of the companions, and must therefore be rejected.

The *Imam* of the Age, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, has written exactly the same:

> "No companion is recorded as denying this argument put forward by *Hazrat* Abu Bakr which proves the death of all previous prophets. And this despite the fact that all the companions were present there. They were all silent upon hearing the argument. This proves that all the companions agreed on this point; such agreement constitutes conclusive evidence, and cannot be in error."
>
> (*Tiryaq al-Qulub*, p. 285, Sign no. 72)

Chapter 4

Views of the Companions

Having proved from the Holy Quran and from Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) that Jesus has died like other prophets, and having shown that this conclusion was also unanimously agreed upon by the companions as the very first *Ijmā'* after the Holy Prophet's death, we now turn to the views of the eminent figures of Muslim history, from the age of the great companions through the middle classical times right up to the present day, showing that they too held the same belief. In this chapter we quote statements of individual companions of the Holy Prophet.

The *Khalifas*

1. *Hazrat* Abu Bakr Siddiq, Allah be pleased with him, said:

   Aina Mūsā, aina 'Īsā, aina Yaḥyā, aina Nūḥ,
   Anta yā ṣiddīq 'āṣ-in tub ilā-l-maulā al-jalīl.

   "Where is Moses, where is Jesus, where is Yahya, where is Noah, [i.e., they have all died], So you, O sinner Siddiq, repent to your Glorious Lord."

2. *Hazrat* Ali, Allah be pleased with him, said:

   Al-mautu la wālid-an wa la walad-an,
   hadha-s-sabīlu ilā an la tarā aḥad.

   Kanā-an-nabī wa lam yakhlud li-ummati-hi
   lau khallad-Allāhu khalq-an qablahu khalada.

> "Death spares not the father, nor the son, it is the path that cares not for anyone.
>
> He (the Holy Prophet) was a prophet, yet he did not remain with his *umma* forever,
>
> Had anyone before him lived forever, he (Holy Prophet) too would have lived forever."

Members of the Holy Prophet's household

1. *Hazrat* Aishah, Allah be pleased with her, relates from the Holy Prophet Muhammad:

   > "Jesus, son of Mary, lived to the age of 120 years." (*Ḥujjaj al-Kirāmah,* p. 428)

   All the narrators of this hadith are reliable (*ibid.*)

2. *Hazrat* Fatima, Allah be pleased with her, relates from the Holy Prophet:

   > "Jesus, son of Mary, lived to the age of 120 years." (*Kanz al-ʿUmmāl,* vol. vi, p. 120)

3. *Hazrat* Imam Hasan ascended the pulpit after the martyrdom of *Hazrat* Ali and said:

   > "O people! This night there has died a man whose status cannot be reached by the earlier or later generations. The Messenger of Allah used to send him to battle, so on his right would be Gabriel and on his left Michael (Mikal), and he would not return without victory. And he has left but seven hundred Dirhems with which he intended to buy a slave. He died on the night on which the soul of Jesus, son of Mary, was taken up, that is the twenty-seventh of Ramadaan." (*Tabaqat Kabir,* vol. iii, p. 26)

Thus the members of the Holy Prophet's household have not only revealed Jesus' age at death but make it clear that it was his soul, *not his body*, which was taken up to heaven, and that he died on the 27th of Ramadaan.

Other companions of the Holy Prophet

1. Explaining the Quranic verse, "O Jesus, I will cause you to die (*mutawaffī-ka*)", Ibn Abbas is recorded as saying:

   "Ibn Abbas said: *mutawaffī-ka* means 'I will cause you to die (*mumītu-ka*)'."

   (*Bukhari, Kitab al-Tafsir,* on verse 5:110).

2. "In the *Mustadrak* (a Hadith collection) it is reported from Ibn Umar that Jesus lived to the age of 120 years. It is likewise also in the *Aṣābah.*" (*Tafsir Kamalain).*

3. The companion-poet Hasan Ibn Thabit sang:

   Wa lau kānat-ad-dunyā qadīm-an bi-ahli-ha
   la-kāna rasūlu-llāhi fīha mukhalad-an.

   "If any people of the world could exist forever, certainly the Messenger of Allah would have lived forever in it."

   Kunta-as-sawāda li-nāẓirī fa ʿamī ʿalaika-an-nāẓir
   Man shāʾa baʿda-ka fal yamut faʻalai-ka kuntu uḥādhir.

   "You (O Prophet) were the pupil of my eye, with your death my eye lost its sight, Whoever remains after you, let him die for I was afraid only of your passing."

Chapter 5

Scholars of the classical times

1. Imam Mālik

Regarding Imam Mālik, one of the four imams of jurisprudence (*fiqh*), it is written:

i. "While most people believe that Jesus did not die, Mālik said that he died."
(*Majma' Biḥār al-Anwār,* vol. i, p. 286)

ii. "In the '*Utbiyya* it is written that Mālik said that Jesus, son of Mary, died."
(*Ikmāl al-ikmāl,* Commentary of *Muslim,* vol. i, p. 265)

2. Imam Ibn Hazm, Amawi Zahiri Qurtabi

He wrote:

> "Jesus, peace be upon him, was neither killed nor crucified, but Allah caused him to die and then raised him. The Almighty has said: 'They did not kill him or crucify him'; and 'I will cause you to die and exalt you'; and 'I (Jesus) was a witness of them so long as I was among them, but when Thou didst cause me to die Thou wert the Watcher over them' and 'Allah takes souls (*yatawaffa*) at the time of death'. Thus there are two kinds of *wafāt:* sleep and death. Jesus in his words 'When Thou didst cause me to die (*falammā tawaffaita-nī*)' was not referring to sleep, but it is correct that by *wafāt* he meant death."
> (*Mahalli fil-Fiqh,* p. 23)

It is written about him:

> "Imam Ibn Hazm adopted the apparent significance of the verse, and believed in his (Jesus') death."
> (*Jalālain,* under verse 3:55)

3. Abul Hasan Ali Hajwairi (Data Ganj Bakhsh)

He writes:

> "The Messenger of Allah said that, on the night of the *Mi'raj*, he saw Adam, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Jesus and Abraham, in the heavens. Assuredly it was their souls."
> (*Kashf al-Maḥjūb,* Chapter *al-Kalām fir-rūḥ,* p. 204).

4. *Shaikh al-Akbar* Muhayy-ud-Din Ibn Arabi

In his Quranic commentary, he writes:

> "The raising (*raf'*) of Jesus means that, at the time of separation, his soul was raised from the lower world to the higher world. And his being in the fourth heaven signifies that the source of his soul's benefit is the spirituality of that sun's sky which resembles the heart of the world, and towards that is his place of return. That spirituality is a light which illumines that heaven with its love, and the shining of the rays upon his soul is done by its stimulation. And as Jesus' place of return is towards its real place of rest, and cannot attain its true development, his (Jesus') descent in the latter days will be in a different body."
>
> (Commentary upon verse 'Allah raised him to Himself', p. 65)

5. Imam Ibn Taimiyya

Taqi-ud-Din Abul-Abbas Ahmad ibn Abdul Hakim ibn Abdus-Salam, known as *Imam Ibn Taimiyya*, has written:

> "Allah has informed, in regard to the Messiah, that he told people only to worship Allah, 'my Lord and your Lord'; and he was a witness of them so long as he was

> among them, but after his death (*wafāt*) only Allah was the Watcher over them. So if some people have misreported him, or misinterpreted his words, or deliberately altered the religion he brought, the Messiah cannot be held responsible for it, for he was only a messenger whose duty was just the delivery of the message."
>
> (*Al-Jawwāb as-Ṣaḥīḥ li-man baddala dīn al-Masīḥ,* vol. ii, p. 280)

6. *Shaikh al-Islam* Hafiz Ibn Qayyim

Shams-ud-Din Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr, known as *Hafiz Ibn Qayyim,* wrote:

> "As for what is related about the Messiah that he was raised up to heaven at the age of 33 years, there is no sound authority for this which one could turn to."
>
> (*Zād al-Maʿād,* vol. i, p. 20)

And:

> "With the exception of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, a person attains to heaven with his spirit only after death and separation from the body, so the spirits of all prophets went to heaven only after death and separation from the body." (*ibid.,* p. 304)

7. Allama Jubā'i

He is reported as saying:

> "This verse shows that Allah caused Jesus to die (*amāta*) and brought about his death (*tawaffā-hu*), and then raised him to Himself."
>
> (Commentary *Majmaʿ al-Bayān,* vol. i, under verse *falammā tawaffaita-nī*)

8. Abu Hayyan

Imam Asir-ud-Din Muhammad ibn Yusuf ibn Ali al-Andalasi, known as *Abu Hayyan Nahwi,* writes:

> "This verse shows that Allah made Jesus die (*tawaffā-hu wafāt al-maut*) before raising him."
>
> (*Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ,* vol. iv, p. 4)

9. Allama Shaukani

Imam Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad ibn Abdullah, known as *Allama Shaukani,* has written:

> "It is said that this verse shows that Allah caused Jesus to die before raising him."
>
> (*Fatḥ al-Qādir Qalmī,* p. 4)

Chapter 6

Modern Arab and Iranian *Ulama*

I. Scholars of Arabia

1. Allama Abdul Rahman Sa'di

In his Quranic commentary, he writes:

> "Allah honoured Jesus by causing his disciples to spread in the world, in his life-time and after his death (*mamāt*)."
>
> (*Tafsīr al-Manān,* published in Makka)

2. Muhammad Asad

In *The Message of the Quran,* published by the Muslim World League of Makka in 1964, the author, Muhammad Asad, translates the verse 3:55 of the Quran in the following English words:

> "Lo! God said: O Jesus! Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and exalt thee unto Me."

Verse 5:117 is rendered as:

> "And I bore witness to what they did as long as I dwelt amongst them; but since Thou hast caused me to die, Thou alone hast been their keeper. For Thou art witness unto everything".

In the footnote to verse 4:157 the translator elucidates:

> "Thus the Quran categorically denies the story of the crucifixion of Jesus. There exist, among Muslims, many fanciful legends telling us that at the last moment God substituted for Jesus a person closely resembling him (according to some accounts, that person was Judas), who was subsequently crucified in his place. However, none of these legends finds the slightest support in the Quran or in authentic Traditions, and the stories produced in this connection by the classical commentators of the Quran must be summarily rejected."

The next footnote contains the statement:

> "Nowhere in the Quran is there any warrant for the popular belief of many Muslims that God has 'taken up' Jesus bodily into heaven."

II. Egyptian Scholars

1. Muhammad Abduh

The famous Egyptian reformist Mufti Muhammad Abduh believed that Jesus had died:

i. "In the *Tafsīr al-Manār,* the teacher and Imam (Muhammad Abduh), after taking the apparent meaning of the verse, has stated that *tawaffā* bears its obvious significance, i.e., causing to die. The raising (*raf'*) comes after that, and it is spiritual elevation."
(*Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā* by Abdul Wahab al-Najar, p. 428)

ii. "*Tawaffā* here means causing to die, as in the obvious and comprehensible significance."
(*Al-Manār*)

2. Allama Rashid Raza

This famous disciple of Mufti Muhammad Abduh writes:

"Hence Jesus' escape to India and his death in that country is not against reason and sense."

(*Quranic Commentary* by Al-Sayyid Rashid Raza, part vi, pp. 42, 43)

3. Mahmud Shaltut

The former Mufti of Egypt and ex-Rector of the world famous al-Azhar University, Cairo, writes:

i. "There is no authority in the Quran or the Sunna which can satisfy the heart upon the belief that Jesus was taken up to heaven with his body and that he is still alive there and that he shall descend therefrom to earth in the last days."

(*Al-Fatāwā,* published by Al-Idara al-'Ama lil-Saqafat al-Islamiyya bil-Azhar, pp. 52-58)

ii. "The Quranic verses in this connection indicate that Allah had promised Jesus that He would cause him to die at the appointed time, and elevate him to Himself, and protect him from the disbelievers. This promise has been fulfilled. His enemies could not kill him or crucify him; instead, Allah caused him to die at the end of his appointed term and elevated him to Himself."
(*Ibid.*)

4. Al-Ustaz Mustafa al-Maraghi

i. Commentating on the verse, *Yā 'Īsā innī mutawaffī-ka*, he notes:

"In this verse is the glad tiding of his (Jesus') deliverance from their (the Jews') plot and his life reaching its appointed term. They would not be able to harm him as they intended by their evil plan. *Tawaffā* means the ordinary death, and *raf'* (elevating) is for the spirit after death. The meaning is 'I will cause you to die (*mumītu-ka*), and after death (*maut*) I will establish you in an exalted position in My presence', as Allah

has said of the prophet Idris: 'He elevated him to a high state'."

(*Tafsīr al-Marāghī*, part iii, p. 165)

ii. In explanation of verse 3:144 of the Quran, he writes:

"It means that Muhammad is but mortal. There have been messengers before him, so they died, and some, like Zacharia and Yahya, were killed. It was not ordained for anyone of them to live forever. So if he (Holy Prophet Muhammad) dies, as had Moses, Jesus, and other prophets died …"

(*Ibid.*, part iv, p. 87)

5. Allama Muhammad Farid Wajadi

He notes the views of some research scholars as:

"Others have said that Allah caused Jesus to die as he causes people in general to die. Then his spirit was raised to Allah, as is shown by the words: *Innī mutawaffī-ka wa rāfiʿu-ka ilayya.*"

(*Dāʾirat-ul-Muʿārif,* Islamic Encyclopedia, vol. vi, p. 784)

6. Ahmad Al-'Ajuz

This famous Lebanese scholar writes:

"Jesus certainly died on earth according to Allah's words *innī mutawaffī-ka* which mean 'I will cause you to die' (*mumītu-ka*). Death (*maut*) is something that is bound to happen, as Allah said through Jesus' tongue: 'Peace be upon me the day I was born and the day I die'."

(*Signed:* Ahmad al- 'Ajuz)

7. Al-Ustaz Abdul Karim al-Sharif

"As the Quran has mentioned, Allah caused the Messiah to die physically, and raised him to Himself

and purified him, just as He causes us to die, raises us to Himself, and purifies us."

(*Al-Nafkhat al-Ūla min al-Tā'wīl*)

8. Al-Ustaz Abdul Wahab al-Najjar

He comments on the Quranic verse *Kuntu 'alai-him shahīd-an mā dumtu fī-him* (5:117), as follows:

> "Jesus watched over his followers and gave them good exhortations till his death (*wafāt*). After that, Allah was the Watcher over them."
>
> (*Qaṣaṣ al-Anbiyā',* 4th edition, 1956)

9. Dr Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi

In his article *Hal al-Qur'ān Mu'jiza* ('Is the Quran a miracle?'), he writes:

> "It is a well known teaching of Islam that Allah is everywhere, and that He is the light of the heaven and the earth. So the words 'He raised him (Jesus) to Himself ' do not have the physical meaning that He lifted him up to heaven, as is the Christian belief. … *Raf'* here means to rescue and to honour, as opposed to a degraded death on the cross in the manner in which criminals are executed. Other interpretations that some Muslim commentators have adopted are more akin to poetry than to sound logic, and the reliability of these commentators' scholarship is rather limited."
>
> (*Al-Mawāhib Āzār,* Argentina, March 1955)

10. Al-Ustaz 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqad

This famous literary figure of Egypt writes:

> "In this connection there is a historical report which cannot be ignored because it deserves great attention. This report relates to the tomb to be found in the Khanyar area of the capital of Kashmir, and known as the grave of the Prophet or the grave of Jesus. It is

recorded in the book *Tārīkh al-Aʿẓamī*, written about 200 years ago, that the grave is that of a Prophet called Yuz Asaf. The people of Kashmir report from their ancestors that this prophet came to that land two thousand years ago."

(*Ḥayāt al-Masīḥ fil-Tārīkh wa Kushūf al-ʿAsr al-Ḥadīth*, p. 213)

11. Allama Ibn Rashid al-Baghdadi

In a poem in praise of the Holy Prophet Muhammad he writes:

Maḥaunā bi-ka al-adyān lau ʿāsha rusulu-nā,
la-jāʾa-ka ʿĪsā tābiʿ-an wa Kalīm

"Through you all other religions were superseded; had previous prophets been still alive, Jesus and Moses would have been your followers."

(*Diwān Maʿdan al-Aḍāfāt*, published in Beirut, p. 28)

III. Iranian Scholars

1. Zain al-ʿAbidin

Iran's famous religious scholar Zain al-ʿAbidin, whose Quranic commentary was published with the support of the Iranian Government, translates in it the verse *Yā ʿIsā innī mutawaffī-ka* as meaning that Jesus' soul, and not his body, was raised to Allah's presence (vol. i, p. 268).

2. Mirza Abul Hasan Qa-ani Sherazi

In a poetic verse he writes:

"Jesus has gone up to the skies, but has left his earthly body here."

Chapter 7

Ulama of India and Pakistan

1. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

This renowned nineteenth century Muslim educationist, social reformer, religious scholar and founder of the Ali Garh Muslim University wrote:

i. "Now we must turn to the Holy Quran to see what it says. The Quran makes mention of Jesus' death in four places … Firstly in *Sūra Āl 'Imrān,* secondly in *Sūra Mā'ida,* … thirdly in *Sūra Maryam* … fourthly in *Sūra Nisā'*. Jesus was not killed by the Jews, either by stoning or by crucifixion, but he died his natural death, and God raised him in rank and status … From the first three verses it is clear that Jesus died a natural death. However, as the *Ulama* of Islam had followed the Christians in accepting that Jesus had gone up to heaven alive, before looking at the Quran, so they have tried to interpret some of the words in these verses to accord with their unsound belief."

(*Tafsīr Aḥmadī* by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, vol. ii, p. 48)

ii. Referring to the expression *'in this'* (Arabic: *bi-hi*) in the verse: 'And there is none of the People of the Book but will believe *in this* before his death' (4:159), which is generally taken to mean *in him* (i.e. in Jesus), Sir Syed writes:

"This points to the words 'And their saying: we have killed the Messiah' [4:157], and to their saying, and not to the Messiah. So this means: 'All the People of the Book, before their death, will believe that Jesus was killed'. After this it is said: 'And on the day of Judgment he, i.e. Jesus, will be a witness against them'. The word '*alā* ['against'] is used to indicate loss or harm. So the meaning is that on the day of Judgment Jesus will be a witness against their belief."

(*Maktūb Sir Syed,* No. 2, p. 48)

iii. "Jesus spent his early life migrating from one place to another. His later life was not very long, for he was 33 years of age when he died, and at that time there were only 70 people who believed in him."

(The Ali Garh Magazine, *Intikhab* No. 1971, p. 48)

2. Nawab Azam Yar Jung

This was the famous Maulvi Charagh Ali. He writes:

" 'And their saying, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah; they killed him not, nor did they cause his death upon the cross (*wa mā qatalū-hu wa mā ṣalabū-hu*)' [The Quran, 4:157]. There were two methods of executing people. The first was crucifixion, applied to those guilty of heinous crimes and to slaves, in which, after hanging from the cross for three or four days, the victim died of hunger, thirst, heat, pain of wounds and disturbed blood circulation. The second method was immediate execution which took two forms: 1. stoning to death, 2. beheading by sword.

"This is why the Holy Quran denies both kinds of execution, i.e., Jesus was not stoned to death or beheaded, nor was he killed by crucifixion. It should be noted that the Jews believe that Jesus was first stoned, and the Christians say that he died by crucifixion. The Quran

refers to both these assertions in the words *wa mā qatalū-hu wa mā ṣalabū-hu,* i.e., they did not kill him by stoning or by crucifixion. It does not mean that Jesus was not nailed to the cross, for having the hands nailed to the cross, the feet tied to it, and then being taken down three hours later, is not sufficient to cause death. What is meant is to deny *death by crucifixion. Wa lākin shubbiha la-hum* means that it so appeared to them; and it happened in this way that to the people who crucified him Jesus appeared to be dead because, having been awake all the previous night, and having suffered shocks and pain, Jesus had fainted or fallen unconscious. From this they thought he had died. However, as it was cloudy (Matthew 27:45, Mark 10:23, Luke 23:44) he did not suffer in the sun, and he was also soon removed from the cross, so he was not greatly harmed.

"The ordinary commentators have written in explanation of the above words that the likeness of Jesus was cast upon some other person. This is ridiculous, for if it were to happen that when we see a particular person it may in fact be someone else upon whom his likeness has been cast, then all sorts of matters of identity would become dubious, there being no certainty in marriage, divorce, or rights of ownership. If the word *shubbiha* [it, or he, appeared as such] is taken to refer to Jesus, as the commentators suggest, it is an error because Jesus is *mushabbahu bi-hi* [one who is made to look like someone else] not *mushabbahu* [one that someone else is made to look like]. And if *shubbiha* be taken to refer to that imaginary, fictitious person who is supposed to have been crucified instead of Jesus, there is no mention at all in the Quran of such a person.

" 'And those who differ therein are in doubt about it; they have no knowledge of it, but follow only conjecture' [The Quran, 4:157]. That is to say, those people

who coin various explanations about the crucifixion of Jesus are in doubt, merely making guesses. In section 16 above we have described what this difference was. Firstly, the Jews asserted that they had killed Jesus. Secondly, the Christians believe that he was crucified. Thirdly, there is the view of sects such as the Basilidans and the Corinthians that in his place Joseph Simon was killed. Fourthly, there is the opinion of Barnabas that Judas Iscariot was crucified in place of Jesus. The Quran declares all these views as conjectures. …

"They killed him not for certain" [4:157], i.e., he was not killed properly as killing ought to be done, or, he was not killed for sure. How could he have been killed for certain when he only spent about three hours upon the cross, which is not sufficient to cause death.

"*Bal rafaʿa-hu Allāhu ilai-hi* [4:158] — rather, God raised him to Himself. This is just like Abraham's statement: 'I flee to my Lord' (37:99); or what is said about the Emigrants: 'And whoever goes forth from his home fleeing to Allah' (4:101). This expression is used by way of honouring and dignifying someone, and does not mean that the person spoken of was seen flying in the clouds to heaven literally and sat somewhere in heaven. There are no grounds for such notions.

"Afterwards, Jesus did indeed die, as the Quran informs elsewhere: 'O Jesus, I will cause you to die (*mutawafī-ka*) and raise you to Myself (*rāfiʿu-ka ilayya*)" (3:55). In explaining this verse, the commentators have displayed much indecision and hesitation, and have in fact reversed the order to read: *rafiʿu-ka ilayya wa mutawwafī-ka*. However, this is not the Quranic wording. In another place it is even clearer: 'When Thou didst cause me to die, Thou wast

the Watcher over them' (5:117). Jesus will say to God that after He caused him to die, He was the Watcher over his followers. Both these verses mention *wafāt,* and this clearly proves death (*maut*): 'Allah takes souls (*yatawaffa al-anfusa*) at the time of their death (*maut*)' (39:42). So his death is spoken of very clearly. As to when and where he died, it is not known, just as it is not known what happened to Mary despite the fact that Jesus put her in the care of his disciple John, who, although an author, never wrote anything about her. Jesus himself went to a remote village hidden from his enemies."

(*Intikhāb Mazāmīn Tahzīb al-Ikhlāq,* vol. iii, pp. 211 to 222, 1896 C.E.)

3. *Tafsir Muhammadi*

In this Punjabi work, Maulvi Hafiz Muhammad of Lakhu Kay writes in poetic verse:

i. "Without doubt a son resembles his father, But the Lord lives forever, He does not die, while death overtook Jesus."

(vol. i, p. 247)

ii. "Of all the messengers of Allah, none survived."

(vol. i, p. 320)

4. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi and Shah Rafi-ud-Din

In the Preface to the Urdu translation of the Holy Quran by Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi and Hazrat Shah Rafi-ud-Din, published in 1934 in Delhi by Nur Muhammad, proprietor of *Aṣḥul-Muṭābi'*, it is stated:

"In that period, Bishop Lefroy gathered an army of missionaries and left England, promising that he would soon convert the whole of India to Christianity. Having collected a great amount of money from the people of England, and assurances from them of continuing

assistance in the future, he entered India and raised a big storm. His attack on the teachings of Islam was a failure … But the attack based on the argument that Jesus was alive in heaven in his physical body, while all other prophets were buried in the earth, was in his view proving to be effective upon the general public. At that juncture, Maulvi Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani stood up and addressed Lefroy and his group, saying: 'The Jesus you talk about is dead and buried like other mortals, and the Jesus whose coming is prophesied is myself, so you must accept me.' By this means he made things so difficult for Lefroy that he could not shake him off. In this way, he defeated all the Christian missionaries from India to England." (page 30)

5. Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi

This famous religious scholar and nationalist leader wrote:

> "*Mutawaffī-ka* means *mumītu-ka* [I will cause you to die] and what generally prevails amongst the public about Jesus' life is a Jewish and Sabean fable … It is not a concealed matter that the source of Islam is the Quran, and in it there is not even one verse proving explicitly that Jesus did not die, and that he is alive and shall come down. These are only the deductions and explanations of some people, and are not free from doubt and uncertainty. How, then, can it be taken to be a fundamental Islamic belief?"
> (*Ilhām al-Raḥmān fī-tafsīr al-Qur'ān,* vol. ii, p. 49)

6. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

He expresses his view as follows:

i. Upon receiving a letter which read:

"Dear Maulana:

… these Mirza'i [i.e., Ahmadi] people ascribe various views to you, and even give references from *Wakil,*

Tazkira, etc., that you believe in Jesus' death, and that you praised Mirza (Ghulam Ahmad) Sahib. Please write a conclusive book so that they dare not speak again. You should also state therein that it abrogates all your previous writings and views, thus leaving no scope for anyone to bring up old matters.

— *Dr. Inamullah Khan, Baluchistan.*"

The Maulana replied:

"1. The death of Jesus is mentioned in the Quran itself. 2. The question of praising or criticising the Mirza Sahib does not arise because:

'If you are bad, you cannot be good,
He himself is bad who considers you to be bad'."

(*Malfūzāt-i Azad*, compiled by Muhammad Ajmal Khan, Maktaba Mahaul, Karachi, pp. 129, 130)

ii. "The belief [in Jesus being alive] by its nature is in every way a Christian doctrine which has appeared in an Islamic guise."

(*Naqsh Azad*, p. 102, compiled by Maulana Ghulam Rasul Mahr)

7. *Allama* Dr. Sir Muhammad Iqbal

i. He writes in a poem:

"Is the son of Mary dead, or does he live? Are Divine attributes separate from God, or one with His Person?

Is the Coming one the Nazarene Jesus, or a *Mujaddid* having the son of Mary's qualities?

Are the Divine words created, or pre-existing from eternity, In which belief does lie the salvation of the Ummah?

Are not sufficient for the Muslims today, These *Lāt* and *Manāt* [idols] carved out by theology."

(*Armaghan Hijaz*, p. 227)

ii. In a letter he wrote:

"I can only tell you what I believe. I consider the Hadith reports about the Mahdi, the coming Messiah, and *mujaddidiyya*, to be derived from Persian and non-Arab conceptions. They have no connection with Arab concepts or the true spirit of the Quran."

(*Iqbal Nama*, 'Collection of the Letters of Iqbal', Part II, letter to Chaudhary Muhammad Ahsan, p. 231)

iii. In another poetic verse he writes:

"Look for the descent of God upon the minaret of your own heart,
And give up waiting even for the Mahdi or Jesus."

(*Baqiyat Iqbal*, p. 451).

iv. He also expressed the following view:

"As far as I understand the meaning of this movement, the Ahmadis believe that Jesus died the death of a mortal human being, and the return of the Messiah refers to a person who bears spiritual similarity to him. This belief gives this movement a rational appearance."

(*Khutbāt Madrās;* also, Newspaper *Mujahid*, 13 February 1935; and *Allama Iqbal ka Paigham Millat-i-Islamiyya kai nam*, p. 22)

v. It was noted about Iqbal:

"Jamal-ud-Din Afghani, Allama Iqbal, and many other thinkers believe that no Mahdi or Messiah will now descend from heaven."

(*Zamindar*, Lahore, 27 July 1952)

8. Maulana Sayyid Sulaiman Nadawi

The following are his views:

i. "Looking at the birth of Jesus, his death and the doctrine of Trinity, some American critics and rationalists now believe that Jesus was just a mythical figure."
(*Khutbāt Madrās,* p. 42, Sermon No. 2, published by the Lahore Academy, 205 Circular Road, Lahore)

ii. "It appears from this that even before Sir Syed [Ahmad Khan] some Ulama held the same viewpoint as his on this question [of Jesus' death]. People today who make this issue a standard for determining belief or disbelief in Islam are indulging in extremism."
(*Muʿāraf,* March 1930, p. 171)

iii. In a letter from a high ranking Pakistan Government official, published by Maulana Abdul Majid Daryabadi in his newspaper *Ṣidq-i-Jadīd* of Lucknow (India), the following is recorded about Maulana Sayyid Sulaiman Nadwi's view of the "descent" of Jesus:

"The Maulana said: 'I do not hold this belief myself and consider the Hadith reports about it to be unsound.' The Maulana had disclosed this view of his to Maulana Ihtasham-ul-Haq, but had added that since to oppose this belief gives rise to much trouble, he refrained from expressing it, and also because this belief did not relate to the fundamentals of Islam."
(*Ṣidq-i Jadīd,* Lucknow, 28 October 1955)

9. Khwaja Hasan Nizami of Delhi

This spiritual leader wrote:

i. "Westerners believe that Jesus ascended to heaven. The Quran contradicts this Christian belief, for it contains the verse: *innī mutawaffī-ka wa rāfiʿu-ka ilayya*, i.e., 'O Jesus, I am about to cause you to die, and grant you exaltation and elevation unto Myself '.

This verse proves the death of Jesus. However, there is another verse saying: *wa mā qatalū-hu wa mā ṣalabū-hu wa lākin shubbiha la-hum*, i.e., the Jews neither killed nor crucified Jesus, but they fell into doubt. This verse proves that Jesus was not put upon the cross, but died his own death. Rising to heaven does not mean that he went up to heaven but that his status in the estimation of God was raised."

(*Roznamcha*, 16 November 1931, p. 15)

ii. "Some people say that Jesus is alive in the fourth heaven. It is proved from the Quran that Jesus was neither murdered nor crucified, but it is not proved that he ascended to heaven alive and is still living. On the contrary, the Quran says: 'O Jesus, We shall cause you to die and then elevate your status in Our sight, or, raise you to Us'. The word w*afāt* occurs first, and it means *to die."*

(Newspaper *Munadi*, Delhi, 18 September 1936, p. 16)

10. Allama Inayatullah Khan Mashriqi

In his famous book *Tazkira*, after discussing historical testimony relating to the death of Jesus, he wrote:

"It is clearly proved today that the prophets were great experts in the laws of nature, and very knowledgeable in the sciences. To be so well-informed is not only true prophethood but also conveys the exemplary lesson that Jesus' death too was according to the Divine law regarding which the Quran says: 'You will not find any change in the law of Allah' (*Sūra Al-Fāṭir*)."

(*Tazkira*, vol. i, footnote, pp.16-17)

11. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan

The famous editor of the newspaper *Zamindar* wrote:

i. "If the moral and spiritual teaching left behind with the Israelites by Jesus after his death (*waṣāl*) is examined,

it appears that only such people could benefit from this inheritance as live in cloisters and monasteries, leading the lives of hermits."

(*Punjab Review*, compiled by Maulana Zafar Ali Khan, vol. i, no. 1, 8 August 1901)

ii. Disclosing Maulana Zafar Ali Khan's view on the issue of Jesus' death, Maulvi Abdur-Rahman, the *Khatīb* of the Jami' Mosque, Wazirabad, writes:

"On around 25th August, taking with me Maulana Sayyid Inayatullah Shah, the *Khatīb* of Jami' Mosque Gujrat, I went to visit Maulana Zafar Ali Khan at Karamabad. Also present there were Mr. Salik the editor of *Inqilāb* and Maulana Charagh Hasan Hasrat the editor of the daily *Iḥsān*. During the conversation, the mention of Mr. Inayatullah Mashriqi came up. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan greatly praised Mr. Mashriqi's sincerity of heart. In answer to this, I told the Maulana that Mr. Mashriqi's beliefs ran counter to Islamic teachings. For instance, in his *Tazkira* he has denied that Jesus is still alive. The Maulana replied:

> 'Belief in Jesus being still alive is not an Islamic belief. Many Muslims have rejected it.'

He was supported in strong words by Maulana Charagh Hasan Hasrat. Hearing this denial of Jesus being alive from Maulana Zafar Ali Khan's tongue pained me beyond words. I said to myself: My God! this is the same Maulana Zafar Ali Khan who has been a leading opponent of the Ahmadis for forty years, and yet his own belief is exactly the same as that of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad."

(Newspaper *Mujahid*, 12 September 1935).

12. Allama Niyaz Fatehpuri

He writes:

> "Thirty-eight years ago I wrote in detail in *Nigār* that it is clearly proved from the Divine word that he (Jesus) died his natural death."
>
> (Monthly *Nigār,* Lucknow, India , June 1961)

13. Maulana Muhammad Usman Farqleet

He was the chief editor of *Al-Jamī'at*, Delhi, and he gives his view as follows:

> "Had belief in the second coming of Jesus been a fundamental article of faith and a means of salvation according to Islam, the Holy Quran would certainly have mentioned this doctrine explicitly since it claims to contain all matters of guidance: *inna 'alai-nā la-l-hudā,* 'it is Our responsibility to show the path of guidance' [92:12]. However, the Holy Quran nowhere speaks of the second coming of Jesus. Hence it is right to conclude that the second coming of any prophet, and that too after the *Khātam al-mursalīn,* is absolutely against the Quran … By saying *Khātam an-nabiyyin* the Quran has, with *alif, lām,* closed the door to every type of prophethood. Furthermore, there is Jesus' statement that 'Ahmad shall come after me'; he himself cannot come after Ahmad."
>
> (*Shabistan Urdu Digest,* New Delhi, November 1974, p. 18)

14. Muhammad Hasan ibn Muhammad Abbas

He was *mujtahid* and *ustad* at the Madrasa Nizamiyya, Lucknow, India. He wrote:

> "The findings of authentic, established books and the Quranic commentaries of the great scholars prove the *wafāt* of Jesus, i.e., that he died. Thus, two verses in particular provide evidence for his death: firstly, *innī mutawaffī-ka wa rāfi'u-ka ilayya;* and secondly, *falammā tawaffaita-nī kunta anta-r-raqība 'alai-him.* These verses are quite sufficient to prove Jesus' death.

> If these do not suffice, I can write still more and give many hadith in support."
>
> (as quoted in *Tashhīz al-Azhām,* April 1921, p. 39)

15. Abdullah Yusuf Ali

In the *first edition* of his English translation and commentary of the Holy Quran, he rendered verse 3:55 as: "I will take thy soul and raise thee to Myself." In the footnote at this point in the first edition, he wrote:

> "Read this along with 4:157 where it is said that the Jews neither crucified nor killed Jesus, but that another was killed in his likeness. The guilt of the Jews remained. But Jesus completed his life and was when he died taken up to God."

16. Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi

The former deputy head of the Jama'at-i Islami writes:

> "The meaning is that Muhammad (peace be upon him) too is a messenger of Allah, just as there had been many other messengers [of Allah] in the world. He too may have to face the same kind of trials and tribulations that they encountered. Just as all messengers (*tamām rasūl*) had had to pass through the stage of death, he too would die one day. His being a messenger [of Allah] does not mean that he would not die or cannot be killed."
>
> (*Tadabbar Quran*, vol. i, p. 287, under verse 3:144, published in Lahore, 1967)

17. Sayyid Abul 'Ala Maudoodi

He has written the following upon this topic:

i. "The most appropriate course of action according to the Quran is to refrain from giving further details of *raf' jismānī* (bodily ascension) and of *maut* (death) … In fact, one should consider Jesus' ascent to be an extraordinary manifestation of Divine power, and leave

its exact nature in brief terms as Allah Himself has left it brief."

(*Maulana Maudoodi par i'trāzāt kā 'ilmī jā'iza,* by Maulvi Muhammad Yusuf, Part I, p. 169)

ii. "I think that this issue is among the *mutashābihāt* (unclear verses), for we cannot comprehend the exact nature of Jesus' ascent, his staying alive somewhere, and his subsequent descent at some future date. What we have been taught about the *mutashābihāt* is that we should not investigate them further, but merely believe in however much has been told to us. To undertake investigation of the *mutashābihāt,* and to be indifferent to the *muḥkamāt* (explicit verses), is clear sign of perversity."

(Letter dated 1 January 1951, ref: 760/71, Ichhra, Lahore)

iii. In answer to a letter, Sayyid Abul 'Ala Maudoodi had his reply written by Mr. Naeem Siddiqi as follows:

"As to what I have understood from the Holy Quran regarding the death of Jesus … I have already explained it, and you can read it. As to Jesus' second coming, I cannot put it higher than a possibility because the Quran gives no explanation of it, and the basis of firm faith cannot be laid upon Hadith. It could be that Allah may send Jesus to earth again, and if He so wishes there cannot be any bar against it. In any case, this point is not part of Islamic doctrine."

(*Rukh Kardār* by Chaudhary Habibullah, p. 243)

iv. "The Quran does not explicitly state that Allah raised up Jesus, body and soul, from earth to heaven. Nor does it clearly say that he died a natural death on earth, and that only his soul was raised up. Thus, on the basis of the Quran, neither of these views can be definitely

rejected or confirmed." (*Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* by Maulana Maudoodi, p. 240)

18. Ghulam Ahmad Pervaiz

In his Quranic commentary, under the verse "They planned, and Allah also planned" (3:54), he writes:

i. "Thus, that nation became divided into two parties, one supporting the truth and the other opposing it. The opponents started using secret means and plans in order to lay their hands on Jesus. Countering this, God produced hidden ways and means of saving him, and it is evident that the means devised by God are superior in every respect. Their final plan was to have Jesus arrested and crucified, so that he would, according to them, die in disgrace and humiliation. But God said to Jesus: Be not perturbed, this conspiracy of theirs can never succeed; you will die a natural death, and I will grant you high ranks; I will take you far beyond the reach of these enemies, and clear you from the accusations coined against you; your followers appear to be weak at this time, but in the end I will make those who follow you to be ever above those who deny you."

(*Mafhūm al-Qur'ān,* Sura 3, vv. 53-54, p. 132)

ii. "Verse 156: The list of their crimes does not end here, but carries on further. The denial of truth and persistence in haughtiness and arrogance made them reach such a stage that they levelled a grievous slander against a virtuous woman like Mary. And regarding a glorious prophet like Jesus, to this day they proudly claim to have killed him, making him die in disgrace. However, the fact is that they neither killed him nor made him die, according to them a death of disgrace, by putting him on the cross. What actually happened was different from what they thought had happened, and the reality became obscure to them. On the other side, the people who differ from the Jews on this

matter, i.e., Christians, do not know the truth either. Their explanations too are based on conjecture and guess work. Thus neither the Jews nor the Christians know the truth of the event, neither of them having any sure knowledge. The truth is what has been stated above, i.e., Jesus was not killed, nor did he die an accursed death upon the cross as asserted by the Jews, but rather, Allah elevated him in status."

(*ibid.*, Sura 4, verses 156 to 158, p. 229)

iii. "Verse 117: I (Jesus) said to them only what You (Allah) commanded me, i.e., worship Allah, your Lord and my Lord. Whilst I was among them I watched over them (so that they may not go wrong), but when You caused me to die I ceased to be the watcher, and after that You were their guardian, not only theirs but You are the guardian of everything in creation."

(*ibid.*, Sura 5, verse 117)

iv. "From the above explanations the fact has come to the fore as to how the Holy Quran has refuted this false belief of the Jews and the Christians that Jesus was crucified. As to the Christian belief that he was raised up to heaven alive, this does not find support in the Quran either. On the other hand, it contains evidence which makes it clear that, like other prophets, he completed his span of life and died."

(*Shu'la Mastūr,* p. 72)

v. "The fact is that the concept of Jesus being raised up to heaven alive is a later invention of the Christian religion. The Jews gave currency to the idea — and it seemed to be so on the face of it — that they had killed Jesus upon the cross. The disciples knew that this was not true, but for reasons of expediency they could not contradict it."

(*ibid.*, p. 83)

19. Maulana Sayyid Abdul Da'im Jalali

He writes:

> "It is recorded in an authentic hadith that the Holy Prophet Muhammad stated: 'Had Moses or Jesus been alive, they would have had to follow me'."
>
> (*Tafsīr Bayān as-Subḥān,* on Part 3, p. 349, published Deoband, India)

20. Abu Zafar Nazish Rizvi

He wrote a poem entitled *Dāstān-e Ḥaram,* a verse of which says of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's demise:

> "After Moses and Jesus, from the world
> Did the honoured Messenger depart to eternity."
>
> (Newspaper *Āzād,* 12 October 1951)

21. Lt.-Colonel Khwaja Abdur Rashid

He writes:

> "As the Ulama of Islam, among whom were many converts from the *Ahl al-Kitāb,* had raised Jesus to heaven, the difficulty then arose for the Quranic commentators as to how he should be brought back in order to die his natural death. Hence, to prove this 'return to earth', he was presented as a sign of the Judgment Day. Iqbal grasped the reality, and so it was that he said:
>
> > 'Look for the descent of God upon the minaret of your own heart, And give up waiting even for the Mahdi or Jesus'."
>
> (Weekly *Chatān,* 1st December 1958, p. 7)

22. Maulvi Muhammad Ali of Jalandhar

He writes:

> "One day I was sitting in a mosque in Multan, where a Mirza'i (i.e. Ahmadi) was having an argument with a

Maulvi sahib. The Mirza'i kept on repeating that Jesus had died, and the Maulvi sahib would shake his head in denial. Fifteen or twenty minutes elapsed in this argument. I came and sat with them, and said to the Mirza'i: Please excuse the Maulvi sahib, and talk to me instead. He at once said: Jesus has died. I raised my hands and said: Let us pray that Allah grants him paradise."

(Newspaper *Azad,* Lahore, 25 January 1952, p. 1)

23. Professor Ilyas Barnee

The author of the famous anti-Ahmadiyya book *Qadiani Mazhab* states in his book *Islam:*

> "As to the second point, how Christ was raised up to God, it is further explained as below: 'Behold! God said, O Jesus! I will take thy soul (make thee die) and raise thee to Myself and clear thee (of falsehoods of those who blaspheme that they crucified thee, Jesus is cleared by the Quran)' — section 6 of sura III *Al-e Imran*.
>
> 'And I (Christ) was a witness over them (Christians) whilst I dwelt amongst them, (but) when Thou took my soul (made me die) Thou wast the watcher over them and Thou art a witness to all things' — Section 16 of Sura V *Ma'ida*.
>
> 'So peace is on me (said Christ) the day I was born, the day that I die, and the day that I shall be raised up to life again (at resurrection)' — Section 2 of Sura XIX *Maryam*."
>
> (Vide *Our Movement,* by Mr. Naseem Saifi, p. 71)

24. Khwaja Ibadullah Akhtar, B.A., of Amritsar

He expresses his view as follows:

i. "We do not wish to say any more on this issue than that Jesus was certainly nailed to the cross. However,

he did not die on the cross, nor could have any man died on the cross in such a short period. But he fell into such a state of unconsciousness as to make people suspect that he had died. In that state of unconsciousness he was taken down from the cross, and being thought to be dead, placed in a tomb a sketch of which we have given in this book. When he became conscious, he left the tomb by himself."

(Damishq, p. 54, published by the Steam Press, Amritsar, India, 1911)

ii. "The Christian religion is so bound up with the person of Jesus that if the Christians were to believe that Jesus has died this religion would also be dead. Thus this religion is based upon the person of Jesus."

(*ibid.*, p. 50)

25. The editor of the monthly *Balāgh al-Qur'ān*, Lahore

He writes:

"Just as un-Quranic ideas have made the birth of Jesus a riddle, so it is also said about his death that he has been living in the fourth heaven for two thousand years, that he shall return, marry, have children, and then die. The argument for his being taken up to heaven is based upon the words *Bal rafa'a-hu Allāhu ilai-hi*, the meaning of which we have explained on page 29, that Allah caused him to migrate (*hijra*) to Himself, for His religion, in accordance with His law for all the prophets. For if *raf'* be taken to mean *lifted up to heaven*, then it would have to be believed that the prophet Idris too is alive and living in a high place, as Allah has said of him: *wa rafa'nā-hu makān-an 'aliyy-an* (19:57) — 'We raised him to a high place'. Obviously, just as the word *rafa'nā-hu* is used about Idris, the meaning of *rafa'a-hu Allāhu ilai-hi* according to the context is to raise in status by migration (*hijra*), not raise up to the sky.

"Now let us consider whether Jesus is alive or dead. For this, the following two verses of the Quran should be examined: 'Muhammad is only a messenger of Allah; many messengers before him had passed away' (3:144); 'The Messiah, son of Mary, is only a messenger of Allah; many messengers before him had passed away' (5:75). Both verses contain the expression: 'Messengers before him had passed away' (*qad khalat min qabli-hi-r-rusul*). According to this, if a messenger before Jesus were alive then it could be believed that a messenger before the Holy Prophet Muhammad, i.e. Jesus, was also alive. But if, according to this expression, no messenger before Jesus himself can be believed to be alive, then it should be remembered that Jesus too, as a messenger before the Holy Prophet Muhammad, according to 'messengers before him had passed away', is included amongst these prophets and has died. And as, by the clear testimony of the Quran and in accordance with the laws of nature, Jesus has died, neither is the view correct that he went up to the fourth heaven nor can the idea of his return arise.

"The following verse is also adduced to prove that Jesus is alive: *Qul: fa-man yamliku min Allāhi shai'-an in arāda an yuhlika al-Masīḥa ibna Maryama wa umma-hu wa man fil arḍi jamī'-an* (5:17). Its usual translation runs: 'Say (O Prophet): Who is it that can interfere in Allah's purpose if He wishes to destroy the Messiah, his mother, and all the creatures on earth'. If, on the basis of this usual translation, Jesus is believed to be still alive, his mother would also have to be believed to be alive because after *Masīḥ* (Messiah) occur the words *umma-hu* (his mother). However, as Mary is accepted as having died in accordance with the Divine law 'every soul must taste death', Jesus too must be considered dead according to this law.

Moreover, since according to the Quranic verdict 'Muhammad is only a messenger, messengers before him had passed away', Jesus passed away before Holy Prophet Muhammad, i.e., he died like the other prophets, the verse under discussion must be translated according to the rule that in Arabic the past may be referred to using the imperfect [i.e. present or future] tense. Remembering also that the *wa* (and) in *umma-hu wa man fil arḍ* (his mother and all the creatures on earth) indicates companionship, the correct significance of this verse, corresponding to the laws of nature, is this: 'Say (O Prophet): Who is it that can interfere in Allah's purpose if He wishes to destroy, along with the Messiah and his mother, all the creatures on earth'.

"In this Quranic verse it is correct to take the imperfect tense as referring to the past, just as in the following verse about the history of Joseph the imperfect tense must be taken to refer to the past: 'And thus did We give to Joseph power in the land — he *had* mastery (*yatabawwa'u*) in it wherever he *liked* (*yasha'u*)'. In this verse the two verbs *yatabawwa'u* and *yasha'u* are in the imperfect, but they cannot be translated except in the past tense. To say about the deceased Joseph that 'he *has* mastery in it wherever he *likes*' is absolutely wrong.

"Jesus' death in his own words — On the Day of Judgment God will ask Jesus: 'Did you tell people to take you and your mother as gods besides Allah'? He shall reply: 'Certainly not! So long as I was among them I watched over them, and did not let them make any such idolatrous utterance. However, when You caused me to die, You were the watcher over them'. Here the words 'when You caused me to die' convey that it was after he died that his people made him and his mother gods. This topic is explained in *Sūra*

Mā'ida, verses 116 and 117. The words of the verse are: *falammā tawaffaitanī kunta anta al-raqība 'alaihim* — 'when You caused me to die, You were the watcher over them'. Since it is proved from the Holy Quran that Jesus and Mary were taken to be gods after the death of Jesus, it follows from this that he has died."

(Monthly *Balāgh al-Qur'ān,* December 1963, p. 32, published by the *Idāra Balāgh al-Qur'ān,* Samanabad, Lahore)

Chapter 8

Conclusion

In this book we have put forward passages from the Holy Quran, Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (*aḥādīth*), the unanimous verdict (*ijmā'*) of the companions, observations of the Righteous Caliphs and other companions, conclusions of the great Imams and early elders of Islam, and the writings of modern Muslim scholars, Arab and non-Arab, of all schools of thought. It is hoped that all this evidence will satisfactorily settle the issue of Jesus' death, leaving no scope for any doubt or query in the reader's mind.

How did belief in Jesus being alive arise among Muslims?

It is quite plain and obvious that, in view of the strong arguments given above, no thinking person can at all accept the belief that Jesus is still alive. The question then remains: How is it that, despite all these clear proofs, the misconception spread widely among the Muslims that Jesus is still alive in heaven in his earthly body for two thousand years, without eating and drinking, and that he will descend in the last days for the reform of the world, his age then being only forty years?

This error is exactly like the error of the Jews about the second coming of the prophet Elijah. And it was Jesus himself, that exalted servant of God, who came and disclosed its true significance, and thus testified to the truth of the prophet Yahya (John the Baptist). On the other hand the Jews, who took this prophecy literally as meaning the second coming of the original Elijah, in their expectation of his coming denied

not only both Yahya and Jesus, peace be upon them, but were deprived of recognizing the Last of the Prophets, the Pride of all the generations earlier and later, namely, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him. Yet all revealed scriptures are unanimous in teaching that prophecies always require interpretation and some aspect or other of them is only unraveled later. For, prophecies are not displayed before the physical eye, but are shown to the spiritual and inner eye. Because of not pondering over them, the masses of every age stumble. Due to ignoring the nature of prophecies, exactly this error has been committed by both the Christians and the Muslims in understanding the prophecy of the second coming of Jesus.

After the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, the Christians who embraced Islam brought with them some of their former, erroneous beliefs. No one can deny that all the wrong customs and ideas prevailing among Muslims today came with the converts who entered Islam. Among these notions was the belief in the second coming of Jesus, on the basis of prophecy, held by the Christians. There was also a prophecy among the Muslims about the coming of the Messiah and Mahdi in the last days, but it did not have the meaning that had been given to the prophecy that prevailed among the Christians. When these people became Muslims, then finding this prophecy in Islam they took it in the same sense as their Christian belief about it. Then gradually the same beliefs spread among the body of the Muslims as were held by both Christians and the Jews.

1. Hafiz Ibn Qayyim's view

> "In the book *Zād al-Maʿād* by Hafiz Ibn Qayyim, may the mercy of Allah be upon him, it is written that what is said about Jesus being raised at the age of thirty-three years is not supported by any authentic report which would make it binding to accept it. Shami said

that it is as Ibn Qayyim has said, and that these are the traditions of the Christians."

(*Fatḥ al-Bayān,* vol. 2, p. 49)

2. Ubaidullah Sindhi

"*Mutawaffī-ka* means *mumītu-ka* [I will cause you to die] and what generally prevails amongst the public about Jesus' life is a Jewish and Sabean fable which spread among Muslims after the murder of Uthman through the friends of Bani Hashim from among the Israelites and other non-Muslims who joined Islam in the time of Ali Ibn Abu Talib, being outwardly friendly but really being enemies of Islam and the Muslims. …

"It is not a concealed matter that the source of Islam is the Quran, and in it there is not even one verse proving explicitly that Jesus did not die, and that he is alive and shall come down. These are only the deductions and explanations of some people, and are not free from doubt and uncertainty. How, then, can it be taken to be a fundamental Islamic belief?"

(*Ilhām al-Raḥmān fi-tafsīr al-Qur'ān,* vol. ii, p. 49)

3. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

"As the Ulama of Islam had followed the Christians, in accepting that Jesus had gone up to heaven alive, before looking at the Quran, so they have tried to interpret some of the words in these verses to accord with their unsound belief."

(*Tafsīr Aḥmadī,* vol. ii, p. 48)

4. Muhammad Asad

He writes in his English translation of the Quran:

"Thus the Quran categorically denies the story of the crucifixion of Jesus. There exist, among Muslims, many fanciful legends … However, none of these

legends finds the slightest support in the Quran or in authentic Traditions, and the stories produced in this connection by the classical commentators of the Quran must be summarily rejected."

(Footnote to verse 4:157. Page 171 of the edition of *The Message of the Quran* published by the Muslim World League, Mecca)

5. Sir Muhammad Iqbal

"I can only tell you what I believe. I consider the Hadith reports about the Mahdi, the coming Messiah, and *mujaddidiyya,* to be derived from Persian and non-Arab conceptions. They have no connection with Arab concepts or the true spirit of the Quran."

(*Iqbal Nama,* Part II, p. 231, Letter no. 87)

6. Maulana Zafar Ali Khan

"Belief in Jesus being still alive is not an Islamic belief. Many Muslims have rejected it."

(Newspaper *Mujāhid,* 12 September 1935)

7. Maulana Sayyid Sulaiman Nadawi

"…even before Sir Syed [Ahmad Khan] some Ulama held the same viewpoint as his on this question [of Jesus' death]. People today who make this issue a standard for determining belief or disbelief in Islam are indulging in extremism."

(*Mu'āraf,* March 1930, p. 171)

8. The Editor of *Tanzīm Ahl-i Hadith*

Referring to an article, he writes:

"This article of mine is in reply to those articles by Lt. Colonel Abdur Rashid and Mr. Rahmatullah Tariq[3] in

3. For the views of Rahmatullah Tariq, see the Appendix, p. 81, no. 5.

which they have tried to prove that the descent of the Messiah close to the Day of Judgment is not an Islamic belief but is a Christian concept which the Muslim *Ulama* adopted due to their simplicity, and then to lend sacredness to this borrowed belief they sought the support of unfounded Hadith reports and wrong commentaries of the Quran to impress it upon the hearts and minds of the Muslim public."

(*Tanzīm Ahl-i Hadith,* 8 June 1962)

9. Ghulam Ahmad Pervaiz

"The fact is that the concept of Jesus being raised up to heaven alive is a later invention of the Christian religion. The Jews gave currency to the idea — and it seemed to be so on the face of it — that they had killed Jesus upon the cross. The disciples knew that this was not true, but for reasons of expediency they could not contradict it."

(*Shu'la Mastūr,* p. 83)

From these extracts it would be clear to the readers that the religion of Islam and the holy founder of Islam have no connection whatsoever with the beliefs entertained generally by the Muslims about Jesus being still alive. Nor can this belief be made a criterion of faith and unbelief because it is not an Islamic belief.

Just as in Hadith the prophecy about the coming of Jesus is to be found, so also does it say about Jesus that he lived to the age of 120 years. Also in Hadith reports the physical description given of the coming Messiah is different from the description given of the historical Jesus. Most important of all, the Holy Prophet Muhammad is the *Khātam an-nabiyyin* and the last of the prophets, after whom no prophet can come, nor can the type of revelation granted to prophets come after him. In view of all this, how can Jesus, who is dead, come among the Muslims in the latter days?

The fact is that just as there are many similarities between the nation of Moses and the followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad in terms of their respective histories, behaviour, etc., likewise the righteous learned ones among the Muslims have been called the likes of the Israelite prophets. In Islamic prophecies the Muslims of the last days have been called Jews but this does not mean that they will actually become Jews. Likewise the title 'Messiah son of Mary' is given to a saint of the Muslims because of the similarity described in the Quran 24:55 and in the hadith which says: "The *ulama* of my *umma* are like the prophets of the Israelites". This title does not indicate that the actual Jesus is meant.

Appendix

In this Appendix we have collected some references which were published or came to light after the publication of this book. The first four references are originally in English, so in these cases it is the original words of the quotations that are reproduced below.

1. Adil Salahi in Saudi newspaper *Arab News*

In the Saudi Arabian English language newspaper *Arab News*, of 18 September 1992, one of the questions on the religious page (*Islam in Perspective*, p. 9), asked by a reader from Jeddah, is as follows:

> "May I put to you a question that you have answered before: 'Had the death of Jesus Christ preceded the miracle of his ascension?' After reading your question in which you said that Jesus Christ did not die, I happened to read a book entitled *Deep into the Quran* by Dr. Kamal Umar, an eminent Pakistani author. He comes decidedly in favor of the view that Jesus Christ died a natural death. I am sending you a photocopy of the relevant pages, requesting you to clear the controversy."

The answer, given by Adil Salahi, is reproduced below in full:

"I have certainly answered that question by saying that Jesus Christ did not die, but Allah raised him to Himself. In this, I have only given the view of the majority of scholars, including contemporary ones. I have quoted the Quranic verse which says in reference to what the Jews used to assert: "And their

statement, 'We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, the messenger of Allah,' they certainly have neither killed him nor crucified him, although it was made to appear so to them." This verse concludes with a categorical statement: "For certain they have not killed him, but Allah has raised him to Himself. Allah is Almighty, Wise."

There are a number of hadiths which speak of the return of Jesus Christ to this world when he will resume his mission of preaching the message of the Oneness of Allah. That will definitely be the Divine message in its final form, i.e. Islam, as preached by Prophet Muhammad (peace be on them both). Those Hadiths and the Quranic statements which speak of the raising of the Prophet Jesus provide a full justification for the view of the majority of scholars that Jesus Christ did not die but was raised by Allah and that he will make a second appearance at a time which will be appointed by Allah Himself and known to Him alone. However, there are references to Jesus Christ in the Quran which use a term that is most frequently used to indicate death although not necessarily so. Linguistically speaking, the word means the completion of a term. When it refers to life, it means the completion of one's life and its termination by death. It is used in this sense in other verses of the Quran. Dr. Kamal Umar quotes these verses in his book and translates them as referring to the death of Jesus. Thus, he gives the translation of Verse 55 of Surah 3 as follows: "When Allah said: Isa! (this is the Arabic name of Jesus) certainly I would cause you to die and would raise you to Myself and will protect you from those people who rejected you." In this respect, Dr. Umar is not alone. A number of scholars, some of them prominent indeed, have expressed this view and argued that this expression which occurs in three different verses in the Quran, means actually that Jesus Christ died a natural death. They point out that Allah has protected him from his enemies, by foiling their attempts to kill or crucify him. There is no argument among Muslim scholars that

Jesus Christ was neither killed nor crucified. But, as you see, some scholars argue that he died a natural death.

When these scholars refer to the "Ascension" of Jesus, or, to use the Quranic expression, his being raised to Allah, they interpret this as having an abstract sense. According to them, it means that his position with Allah has been enhanced and he has been given a very high status. This is indeed the case, because Jesus Christ is one of the five messengers of Allah who have shown the greatest resolve in their service of Allah's cause. The other four are: Noah, Abraham, Moses and Muhammad (peace be on them all).

When these scholars speak about the Hadiths which tell of the second coming of Jesus Christ and what he will be doing, such as breaking the cross, killing the pig and preaching the message of the Oneness of Allah, they cast strong doubts about their authenticity. Their argument is not without validity. Where does this leave us? The answer is that there are two views: The first, which is held by a majority of scholars, is that Jesus Christ did not die but was raised by Allah and that he will make a second coming at a time determined by Allah, when he will be preaching the message of Islam. The other view is that Jesus Christ died a natural death after Allah had saved him from his enemies. Both groups of scholars agree that Jesus Christ was neither killed nor crucified. Needless to say, those who subscribe to the second view do not speak of a second coming of Jesus Christ.

What we need to know is that the raising of Jesus Christ alive to Heaven is not an article of Islamic faith. This means that if a person denies it he is not an unbeliever. A person is not considered to be an unbeliever for preferring a reasonable and valid interpretation of a Quranic verse. Had the Quranic verse been of the sort that cannot admit more than one interpretation, then denying its meaning could easily land the person who makes such a denial in the class of non-believers. This means that a person may adopt the view he prefers, but when he does

so, he should arrive at the conclusion he prefers after carefully studying the matter and considering the evidence each group of scholars supply in support of their view. Dr. Umar has made a choice to which he is certainly entitled. I chose the other view and I am equally entitled to it.**"**

2. Zakariya Idrees Oseni in *Rabita's* journal

The October 1981 issue of *The Muslim World League Journal,* the monthly organ of the Rabita al-Islami, published from Makka in Saudi Arabia, carries an article by Shaikh Zakariya Idrees Oseni of Nigeria entitled *Jesus in the Scriptures as seen by Muslims.* Near the close of this article the author writes:

> "Whatever be the case, the Islamic belief is that Jesus died a natural death after God had saved him from crucifixion. The stories of his ascension after he had been saved from crucifixion, which we find in some Arabic books, are obviously taken from Christian sources and should not be taken very seriously by Muslims with discerning minds."

3. Imam A. Khatib on website

A question was asked, dated 26 July 2001, to the imams who answer questions about Islam on the website www.icgt.org, as to the meaning of the expression *mutawaffī-ka* about Jesus in verse 3:55 of the Holy Quran. (See page 18 of this book.) The questioner, referring to the fact that this term elsewhere in the Quran means death, asked:

> "Now when this is like this, what does the word denote in ayah 3:55? Does it mean that Hadhrat Isa (as) died?"

The reply given by the Imam is as follows:

> "Isa (as) died like any human being. There were some miraculous actions taking place at his birth and saving him from the Jews, but this will not take him of the human arena and its nature. Many tafseers of Quran are

> quoting information from Christian books, so one should utilize his common sense and not to believe in everything written. Quranic text is undebateable but any other book could be right or wrong.
>
> Regards.
>
> Imam: A.M. Khattab"

The web address (*url*) of the exact place on this website where the question and answer can be read is the following:

www.icgt.org/Questions/QandA.htm#q004

(This link was last confirmed as working on 12 November 2001.)

4. Ahmad Von Denffer in his book *Islam for Children*

This book is published by the Islamic Foundation, Leicester, England, an organization which represents the ideology of movements such as the *Jama'at-i Islami* of Pakistan. Indeed Professor Khurshid Ahmad of the *Jama'at-i Islami* was at one time Director of the Islamic Foundation. At the end of the chapter dealing with Jesus, Ahmad Von Denffer writes :

> "Some people say that Prophet Isa was nailed onto a cross by his enemies and that he died in this way. But we know this is not true. Allah protected Prophet Isa so that the people could not carry out their evil intentions. Allah said to Isa: I will let you die in peace and then you will come to Me and be with Me. Those who had been following you and prayed to Me and did good will be brought to Me."
>
> (page 81 of the 1993 re-print)

Von Denffer's statement here, *"Allah said to Isa: I will let you die in peace and then you will come to Me and be with Me"* is obviously based on the words of the Holy Quran: "When Allah said: O Jesus, I will cause you to die (*mutawaffī-ka*) and exalt you (*rāfi'u-ka*) in My presence" (3:55). Apart

from mentioning Jesus' natural death so plainly at the beginning of this statement, Von Denffer's next words "*and then* you will come to Me and be with Me" clearly refer to spiritual exaltation *after death* ("and then"), so that Jesus did not go to Allah while he was alive.

His next statement, that the true followers of Jesus were also promised by Allah that they "would be brought to Me", shows that the true followers of Jesus went to Allah's presence *in the same manner as Jesus*, and this further proves that according to Von Denffer's view Jesus went to Allah in the same way as all other righteous men and women do, that is to say, spiritually after death.

5. Rahmatullah Tariq in his book *Burhan-ul-Quran*

This Pakistani author writes in a recent book under the subheading '*Tawaffā* means death absolutely':

> "It is futile to write on this subject in 'detail', because so much explanation has been given of the word *tawaffā,* in the debates between Ahmadis and non-Ahmadis, as perhaps of no other word. Nonetheless it is necessary to point out certain leaders of Islamic thought, some of whom lived centuries ago, and as far as my knowledge goes they were not Ahmadis or familiar with Ahmadiyyat. Therefore, as an impartial observer, their view cannot be ignored that they all took *tawaffā* to mean death.
>
> I am referring to: the Shia commentator of the Quran Allama Tabrisi (d. 1153), Shaikh Akbar Muhayy-ud-Din Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), Imam Ibn Qayyim (d. 1350), Imam Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Yusuf known as Abu Hayyan (d. 1344), the famous commentator of the Quran Allama Mustafa Al-Maraghi (d. 1928), Allama Mahmud Shaltut, Rector of Al-Azhar University, Egypt (1893–1963), Allama Rashid Raza (d. 1935), and Qazi al-Qaza Badr-ud-Din

Mahmud (d. 1420). Some of their statements are presented here.

Allama Mahmud Shaltut writes: 'It is obvious that the elevating (*raf'*) which is after death (*tawaffā*) is elevating in terms of rank, not elevating the body' (*Al-Fatāwā,* published by Dar-ush-Sharuq, Beirut and Cairo, page 61 to 65).

Rashid Raza writes: '*Tawaffā* in the dictionary means to take a thing fully, and from this it is used as meaning death' (*Tafsir Manar*, 5/316/3).

He also writes: 'The word *mutawaffī-ka* in this verse at once gives the meaning that "I will cause you to die (*mumītu-ka*) and after death (*maut*) I will give you a high rank with Me", as has been said about Idris: And We raised him to an elevated state."

(*Burhan-ul-Quran*, published by Idara Adbiyaat Islamiyya, Multan, Pakistan, 1997)